New! #1 Adventures in Science Fiction

PREMIERE ISSUE
JUNE 1995 £3 OF YOUR EARTH MONEY

SFX

THE HOT NEW SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

WHAT *HAS* HAPPENED TO DOCTOR WHO?

JUST HOW GOOD *IS* STAR TREK: VOYAGER?

IAIN M BANKS IN THE SFX INTERVIEW

YESTERDAY'S HERO: THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN

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SFX

The Science Fiction Magazine

#1 June 1995

Did you know...

...Godzilla's name ("Gojira" in Japanese) is a blend of "gorilla" and the Japanese word for "whale"?

Contact us at:

SFX
Future Publishing,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW

(01225) 442244

(01225) 446019

sfx@futurenet.co.uk

Who we are and what we do

Editor **Matt Bielby**
mattb@futurenet.co.uk

Deputy Editor **Dave Golder**
sfx@futurenet.co.uk

Staff Writer **MJ Simpson**

Production Editor **Dan Goodleff**

Art Editor **Matt Williams**

Did you know...

...William Gibson's classic novel of "cyberpunk" technology, *Neuromancer*, was written on a manual typewriter?

Contributors

Jon Abbott, Mary Branscombe, Andy Butcher, Stuart Campbell, Jonathan Davies, Maff Evans, Tanais Fox, John Grant, Steve Holland, Steve Jarratt, David Langford, Rod Lawton, Karen Levell, Garry Marshall, Clive Parker, Mike Reccia, Adrian Rigelsford, Jim Swallow, Paul Thomason, Gary Whitta. (Our apologies if we've forgotten anyone!)

Photography

Peter Canning, Rob Scott, Rick Buettner, Craig Stennett

Interior Art

Steve Caplin, Space Cadet by Rian Hughes

Cover

Lori Petty as Tank Girl

Did you know...

...the five Tracy brothers in *Thunderbirds* were all named after Apollo astronauts?

Advertising

Advertising Manager **Duncan Ferguson**
Senior Sales Executive **Rob Bennett**
Sales Executive **Adrian Hill**

Production Co-ordinator **Craig Broadbridge**
Ad Design **Scott Purnell**

Publicity Manager **Liz Ramsay** (0171) 331 3920

Product Manager **Tamara Ward**

Publisher **Greg Ingham**
Group Production Manager **Judith Green**
Assistant Print Services Manager **Jane Grey**
Paper Controller **Fiona Deane**
Print Services Co-ordinator **Janet Anderson**
Print Services Manager **Matthew Parker**

Joint Managing Director **Greg Ingham**
Group Art Director **Matt Williams**
Chairman **Nick Alexander**

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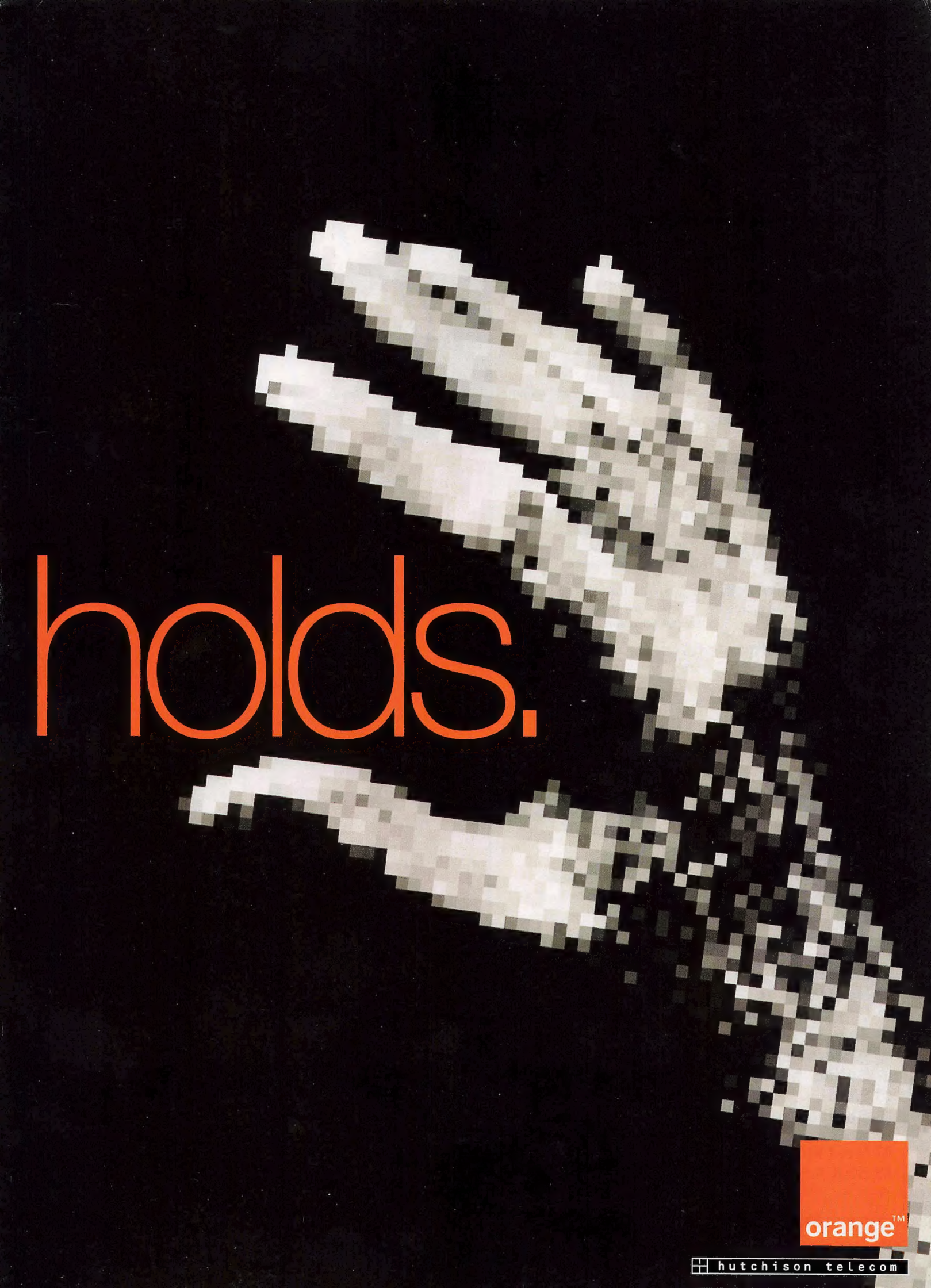
SFX's official beer of the month: **Guinness**

SFX 1 put together to the sounds of: *Wake Up!* (The Boo Radleys), *Only Everything* (Juliana Hatfield), *Definitely Maybe* (Oasis), *Home* (Terry Hall) and other top tunes.

Thanks to *everyone* who helped out. There are just too many to name here!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Adventures in Science Fiction

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34 Doctor Who What *has* been happening to the good Doctor? We reveal all, including a tantalising look at the stillborn *Dark Dimensions,* details of what went on at Amblin, and assorted from-the-horse's-mouth tales of why Brit fans fight on to keep the character alive... **By Dave Golder**

44 The SFX Interview: Iain M Banks The top Brit SF author gets the full couch treatment, including self-penned "reviews" of all his books. Plus! The truth behind that "M", and should Arnie star in the movie version of *Canal Dreams?* **By Mary Branscombe**

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56 Couch Potato The first six episodes of *Star Trek: Voyager* kick off our series of beer-and-pizza video all-nighters. Exactly how annoying is Janeway's voice after eight pints? We'll let you know... **By Jonathan Davies** and friends.

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Welcome to SFX!

Tank Girl screws the last nuts and bolts into place for this, the first historic issue of SFX. Over the next 100 pages you'll find more science fiction and fantasy news, reviews and opinion than you'll have ever seen in one place before. There's everything from a massive interview with top SF writer Iain M Banks to a look at the future of Doctor Who to a giant report from the set of Tank Girl. We've loved putting this first issue of SFX together, and I hope it shows.

Onwards!

Matt Bielby, editor

Rian Hughes

AMAZING STORIES FROM THE WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY, PLUS GOSSIP, MINI-INTERVIEWS, PRODUCTION HELL – OUR LOOK AT MOVIE PROJECTS CURRENTLY IN "DEVELOPMENT" – AND MORE...

This month in Strange Tales...

HARD!

Our first look at *Judge Dredd*, perhaps *the* biggest blockbuster movie to hit our screens this Summer, is on **page 9.**

BITCH!

Not Sigourney, you understand – just the monsters she fights. Our exclusive interview with Ripley is on **page 10.**

SCARY!

Can new Brit action/horror pic *Proteus* hope to live up to *Alien*, *The Thing et al*? We take a first look on **page 11.**

WET!

Is *seaQuest DSV* all washed up? Our look at season two begins on **page 13.**

SFX Top Tens

To kick things off, here's the SF movie/TV show top ten top ten.

1. Capricorn *One*
2. Moon Zero *Two*
3. Saturn *Three*
4. Phase *Four*
5. Babylon *Five*
6. Deep Star *Six*
7. Blake's *Seven*
8. The Cars That *Eight* Paris (Er...)
9. Deep Space *Nine*
10. *2010 (I think maybe we're stretching things a bit far here – Ed)*

It's the $64,000 question...

Why is there so little SF on British TV?

High-quality imported SF, like *The Outer Limits*, attracts good audiences on BBC 2 and C4.

While the "shock" success of *The X-Files* seems to have finally wakened the BBC to the potential of tele-SF, the British commercial channels continue to look down on the genre as merely kids' stuff. And expensive kids' stuff at that. What the hell's going on?, asks **Dave Golder**.

TV has gone SF mad. Apparently. At least, that's what the *Radio Times* announced in its lead feature earlier this month. However, a closer look at the situation soon reveals that "slightly touched" might be a good deal closer to the mark. Yes, it's true the BBC does (at last) show promising signs of *X-Files*-fuelled delirium, but Channel 4 remains as theoretically-into-it-but-strapped-for-cash as ever, while most of ITV continues to be completely dismissive,

"We have a policy at Channel 4 that bought-in US drama is not shown at prime time – between 7pm and 9pm. We could show *Babylon 5* at 10pm, but that would stop a lot of kids from enjoying it. If someone came to us with a good [SF] idea, we'd consider it." Laurie Bellew, Channel 4

Satellite sci-fi

Of course, there's one obvious place to go if you want to see SF on TV...

Sky One, with its diet of imported shows, tends to show the best of American SF before any of our terrestrial channels. Bravo and UK Gold repeat the SF classics, both imported and British. But there's one big challenge satellite TV on this side of the Atlantic hasn't yet taken up on – setting up a channel devoted to SF.

"There are opportunities to build up many more channels on Sky," admits Liz Roberts, Head of Press and Publicity at Sky One, "but it's still speculation at this time as to when and what channels they might be. An SF channel has certainly been talked about. [After all], ratings showed that *Star Trek* was always in the top ten... We're also committed to *Voyager*."

***RoboCop*: Hot Sky import.**

And the reason why Sky One is so "committed?"

"Because SF appeals to a category of people that want to watch these programmes in a more dedicated fashion than once a week," says Roberts. In other words, SF fans just can't get enough – and they're always willing to pay for more.

and looks likely to carry on thinking that way for the foreseeable future.

What prompted the *RT's* enthusiastic outburst was the desire to publicise BBC 2's latest acquisition, the '90s version of SF anthology classic *The Outer Limits*, which began on Monday 1 May. Fans will realise that this has turned up on terrestrial British TV an uncharacteristically short time after its original US broadcast, a fact the BBC happily admits is directly related to "the success of *The X-Files*."

Certainly, *The X-Files*, which often scored BBC 2's highest viewing figures during its first season showing, seems to have got the corporation very much in the mood for sci-fi. Gerry Anderson's *Space Precinct* is on its way, of course, and it'll be joined this Autumn by a second season of *The X-Files*. Another import, *MANTIS* (see boxout, right), has also been bought up, although no slot has been confirmed for it yet.

On the homefront, a seventh, ten-part series of *Red Dwarf* is already in pre-production – although Chris Barrie may not be involved, after expressing doubts about the quality of recent *Dwarf* scripts. But with-him-or-without-him, the show will be with us in '96. A Christmas special is also planned for the end of this year. Rounding things off for the BBC are continued showings of *The Next Generation*, repeats of *Quantum Leap*, plus *The Champions* and various old Gerry Anderson series, all on BBC 2.

***The X-Files*: Massive BBC 2 hit, and fuelling talk of more SF TV.**

Homegrown SF fare

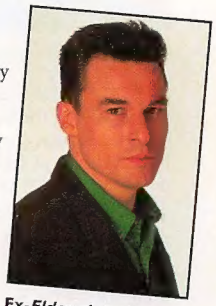
But the most exciting news is still to come. According to Michael Jackson, controller of BBC 2, the BBC Drama department is currently "considering the possibility of a science fiction series," although "no further information is available yet." This has again led to speculation that the BBC is busy behind the scenes preparing a new season of *Doctor Who*.

The official BBC line on this topic, however, remains disappointingly familiar: "*Doctor Who* is currently under development with Amblin and Universal," said a spokesperson, "but no announcement has yet been made by BBC Worldwide on the timing or casting of this project." (For more on the many possible futures of *Doctor Who*, turn to our complete "story so far" feature, starting on page 34.)

Of course, it's quite possible – even likely – that the drama series referred to by Jackson may have nothing to do with *Doctor Who* at all. Certainly, SFX has recently learned that at least two writers connected with *Who* – Bill Baggs and Kevin Davies – are currently in discussion with the BBC over other possible SF projects.

Another encouraging sign is that the BBC is already discussing scripts for a second series of *Bugs*. It may only be marginally SF – and less than consistent in its first season – but with possible new writers including Andy Land and Paul Cornell, both authors of *Doctor Who* fiction, the science fiction element could easily be bumped up a tad.

And even if it isn't, the high production standards set by *Bugs* can only be seen as a step in the right direction – especially if, as the BBC hopes, viewing figures for the show (the pilot attracted 12.5 million viewers) hold up in the long run.



Ex-*Eldorado* bad guy Jesse Birdsall stars in the hi-tech *Bugs*.

Bleak ITV

At ITV, however, the picture is a lot bleaker. Shows get bounced around, cut drastically to fit pre-set time slots and shown out of order with depressing regularity. No wonder ratings are often low (ITV's Head of Drama Serials, Vernon Lawrence, says the network's bad attitude towards SF is purely down to "poor audiences") – although when they have a knack for acquiring turkeys like *seaQuest DSV* and *Time Trax*, perhaps that's not so surprising.

Apart from these US imports – ITV has bought the second series of *seaQuest*, but there's no guarantee of when it will be shown – fantasy and SF on the commercial networks is almost always plonked in the "for kids" slots.

The one big exception recently has been Yorkshire TV's *Chiller*, a lame

Heads up! They're coming through...

A brief round-up of stuff that could, should and – just maybe – *will* turn up on terrestrial TV in the next year or so...

• *Discworld* – Granada

This is still in the early stages, and will probably be beaten to the screen by an animated version of *The Colour of Magic* which is being produced by Cosgrove Hall for Channel 4.

• *Doctor Who* – BBC

Well, you never know. Fingers crossed and all that. Even if the Amblin deal falls flat on its face, it still seems likely the BBC will attempt to get some sort of *Doctor Who* project going. Whether it's this millennium or the next, though, is anyone's guess.

• *MANTIS* – BBC

This latest take on the "avenger with a futuristic phallic extension" theme met with a cool reception in the US and has since been cancelled. It's still coming to the BBC later this year, though.

• *Highlander* – BBC

This has gone down well with audiences and critics alike. To be aired before the year's out.

• *Red Dwarf* Season Seven – BBC

Shooting starts this summer on a ten-part series for broadcast sometime in 1996. A 1995 Christmas special is also planned.

• *Space Precinct* – BBC

Gerry Anderson's latest live action romp is due out on BBC 2 this Autumn. Initial audience figures on Sky One were impressive, but the critics savaged it. Later episodes much improved, though.

• *Travelling Light* – BBC

A one-off drama for broadcast on the BBC, starring the "dream team" of Sam Fox, Yazz and Toyah as a futuristic pop trio.

• *"Victorian X-Files"* – Carlton

Names like Iain M Banks and William Gibson have been linked to this, perhaps the most exciting-sounding Brit TV effort we've heard of. Nice idea if it comes off...

• *VR.5* – BBC

Fox Television's Virtual Reality show starring *Fame*'s Lori Singer. It's done well in the States – happily for the BBC, who snapped it up mere weeks after its US debut.

• *The X-Files* The Second Season – BBC

Expect this to blast onto your TV screens around September time – and with the first season being such a success, expect a *big* fanfare from the promotions department.

***Red Dwarf*: New season for '96.**

***Babylon 5*: A hit with fans, and doing well at 6pm on Channel 4. But should it be on later?**

series of ghost stories which performed fairly badly in the ratings. "*Chiller* has not been a great success," admits Lawrence, "so it's impossible to say at this stage whether there'll be more."

And Channel 4?

Babylon 5 is about the only major SF programme currently running at Channel 4. But considering the popularity of SF in the US, doesn't Channel 4 think it's worth risking a more prominent place in the schedules for this, its sole SF offering?

"We have a policy at Channel 4 that bought-in US drama is not shown at prime time – between 7 and 9pm," Channel 4 spokesperson Laurie Bellew said. "We could show *Babylon 5* at 10pm, like we do *ER*, but that would stop a lot of kids from enjoying it."

Okay, but that still doesn't explain why there isn't more homegrown science fiction/fantasy being developed for UK television. Does Channel 4 have something against the genre too?

"We have no policy against it," assures Bellow. "If someone came to us with a good idea, we'd consider it."

The big problem...

The sheer expense of producing SF TV shows is really the main stumbling block – at least according to the BBC. "Science fiction programmes are very expensive to produce, and must attract a substantial audience to succeed," believes Alan Ayres, Head of Drama Publicity. Another BBC spokesperson added: "Science fiction is not considered 'kids' stuff' or 'minority interest programming' – but at about £500,000 an hour, it must have a broad audience appeal."

Point taken, but it hardly explains why the BBC spends considerably more on one-off plays like *A Very Open Prison* – which attracts audiences of around two million at peak hours on BBC 1 on Sunday nights – when, by contrast, *The X-Files* gets six million on BBC 2 on Thursday nights.

Even the fact that BBC Enterprises makes a consistently healthy profit selling *Doctor Who*, *Red Dwarf* and other SF-related videos doesn't seem to sway the corporation's opinion. It told us: "Profits from video sales are earned by BBC Worldwide. A proportion of Worldwide's income is ploughed back into programmes. Successful overseas sales of a particular programme do not necessarily benefit that programme."

Ah, so the profits from selling *Who* videos end up being used to develop things like *Seaforth*. Makes sense, doesn't it? That's *bound* to be a hit for BBC Worldwide come 2005...

SFX SAYS

Cost is often put down as the main reason why SF doesn't get much of a look-in on UK TV, but there's no reason why fantasy TV has to be any more expensive than "normal" TV – *The X-Files* has proved that.

Here, then, is the SFX five-part plan to making a top, will-sell-brilliantly-abroad-and-on-video SF/fantasy series – and all for the cost of a drama show like *Dangerfield*.

1. Go to DC Comics and buy the TV rights to *Hellblazer*, a comic book about a London-based magician called John Constantine and his constant run-ins with the supernatural.

It won't cost much – it's not a top seller – and DC Comics would love the publicity.

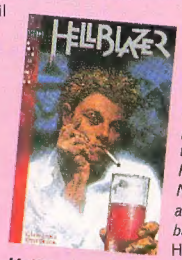
2. Get British/Irish comic book writing talent like Garth Ennis, Grant Morrison, Neil Gaiman (etc.) – all familiar with the character and the genre – to write outline scripts.

3. Get "proper" TV writers to help tidy them up.

4. Chose a charismatic lead. The character, originally introduced by Alan Moore in *Swamp Thing*, was based on Sting, but we recommend Sean Bean or Iain Glen.

5. Make the bloody thing. The effects budget need not be great – *Hellblazer* is mainly mood and dialogue, and the angels, devils and other supernatural characters Constantine comes up against look human in the same way Robert De Niro's Lucifer did in the classic chiller *Angel Heart*.

(Note to TV producers reading this: Pop into Forbidden Planet on New Oxford Street and pick up a few back issues. Hellblazer. *From DC. You'll be so glad you did.)*



***Hellblazer*: Would be tops on TV.**

Don't quote us!

Hot rumours from the SF movie industry...

"With filming on *Waterworld* finally complete, Kevin Costner might like to consider returning to the fantasy genre and filling the shoes of Indy's brother for the fourth movie in the series...

The Men In Black tells the story of an *X-Files*-ish team who cover up close encounters of the third *and* fourth kind (where the aliens do naughty things to humans). Effects sequences include a UFO crashsite littered with dead aliens...

Watson's mentor gets the swashbuckling treatment in *Sherlock Holmes*, which brings together *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Final Problem*, and uses computer animation to create the ultimate hound. Favourites include Alan Rickman as Holmes and Jack Nicholson as Moriarty...

Rick Baker, special effects genius behind *American Werewolf in London et al*, has joined forces with Stanley Kubrick to bring an incredible variety of robots to life on an iceberg for his new film *AI (Artificial Intelligence)*. But don't hold your breath. The film's not due to start filming until next year...

With *Doctor Who* caught in development hell (see page 34), the eyes of American studios are now falling on other UK fantasy shows. Look out for a *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* movie – favourite casting rumours for this one include Ed O'Neill (Ed Bundy in *Married With Children)* as the living half of the titular pair, and Danny DeVito as the ghost. A *Saint* movie is also in development, and a script for a *Thunderbirds* film has already been written. As for *Blake's 7*, questions are currently being asked about the availability of the rights...

Tom Cruise, Brian De Palma and make-up man Rob Bottin have been frequenting the screening theatres of London's Wardour Street to check out make-up tests for *Mission Impossible*, currently being shot at Pinewood. Cruise has to be seen in disguise at several points, as an old man and the President of the USA. Make-up is also being devised to make the stuntmen look more like Cruise – perfect for the climax where a helicopter chases a train through a tunnel...

Ideas are already being thrown around for *Batman 4*, perhaps to be called *Batman Triumphant*, in which Val Kilmer and Chris O'Donnell face Mr Freeze. The return of Tommy Lee Jones' Two Face has not been ruled out. A script for Tim Burton's *Catwoman* project is also reaching completion...

Popular Cameron *Spider-Man* rumours: Arnie's been asked to play Doctor Octopus; *T2's* Edward Furlong may well play Peter Parker...

Don't laugh, but Kenneth Branagh is set to direct a version of classic Alan Moore/David Lloyd comic strip *V for Vendetta*..."

"I am the law!"

Sylvester Stallone *is* Judge Dredd in perhaps the most eagerly awaited movie of the year... **Matt Bielby** reports.

This film has been in the making for years, it seems. Certainly, there's been talk of a movie version of Britain's most successful comics character since *Dan Dare* for most of the strip's 18-year history, but only in the last 18 months or so has it actually become a reality. The almost-finished movie sounds great too – Sylvester Stallone is Dredd, Diane Lane is colleague Judge Hershey, and familiar comic characters like Dredd's clone-brother Rico and Cursed Earth crazy Mean Machine Angel also make appearances. Director Danny Cannon is a bit of an unknown quantity, but his background as a fan of *2000AD* – the comic where Dredd first appeared – bodes well. And enough money has been spent to guarantee that the flick will definitely look spectacular, if nothing else.

It's easy to assume that every SF fan (in Britain, at least) knows everything about the Judge and his world, but for Dredd virgins, here's a brief fill-in: Dredd's the toughest, hardest cop in Mega City One, a vast American city-state of the future. He's judge, jury and executioner, and needs to be – because he's up against mutants, aliens, robots, monsters and extra-dimensional beings, as well as your normal street thugs. He's a humourless bastard, old Dredd, but at least he's *our* humourless bastard.

The film will be released nationwide on Friday 21 July, but before then we'll be having a massive "Making of *Judge Dredd*" feature in SFX 2. Here's a taster of what's to come...

Dredd's Lawmaster bike, one of the most recognisable icons from the comic strip, has been modified and streamlined for the movie. It still comes packed with cannons, but now it can fly! Indeed, the flying bike chase above the city is said to be one of the film's real highlights.

The movie Judge's uniform sticks reasonably closely to the standards set by the comic over the years, the big changes being that it's lycra, not leather – and that codpiece! (What *were* they thinking of?)

Well, the movie people always told us the helmet would come off... Dredd (Sylvester Stallone) faces up to the crazed cyborg maniac Mean Machine Angel. For much of the film, Sly runs around like this, *sans* headgear – news of this shocked hardcore fans of the comic, who insisted Dredd's face should never be seen. (As *2000AD* aficionados will know, Dredd is so dedicated to The Law he never takes his helmet off – not even when he's asleep!)

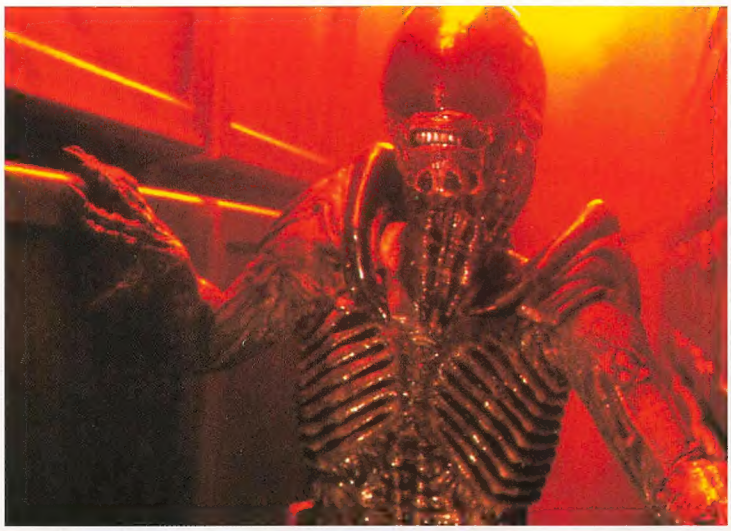
This gigantic ABC war robot, based on the character Hammerstein from *2000AD's* ABC Warriors strip, is actually a full-scale working model, packed with hydraulics to make it move. It's one of several formidable opponents the rockhard, but-at-the-end-of-the-day-only-flesh-and-bone, Dredd is up against.

Mean Machine Angel, played by British actor Chris Adamson, is the hardest member of the Angel gang, a bunch of psychos from the Cursed Earth, the radioactive badlands outside Mega City One. He's got a giant mechanical arm and dial on his head that modifies his mood.

Mega City One, the gigantic, overflowing New York-plus-most-of-the-Eastern-seaboard of the future, is promising to be one of the real stars in *Judge Dredd*. Not only do the special effects shots showing the entire cityscape promise to knock *Blade Runner* into a cocked hat, but the street-level sets, built at Shepperton Studios in Surrey, are gigantic. Just check out this street scene...

Alien queen

Sigourney Weaver talks about Ripley and *Alien 4*. Interview by **Giuseppe Salza**.



One thing *Alien*³ had going for it were the intriguing new Alien designs – although even they lost their power through overuse. *Alien 4* promises more – both in storyline *and* monsters.

Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) as last we saw her. How will they bring her back for *Alien 4*?

We all remember it, of course – *that* scene. The one where Ripley, survivor of two-and-three-quarter *Alien* films, casts herself (and the alien queen she is host to) into the fiery furnace on the planet Fiorina. Up to that point, *Alien*³ had been a tedious and pointless film. Now, with the death of Sigourney Weaver's character, it earned itself an instant place in movie history – if only as the flick that killed off the Strongest Heroine in Action Movies Ever. Across the planet, fans howled in protest.

But, of course, no-one stays dead in Hollywood – especially if there's money to be made bringing them back. Strong sales of the laserdisc collectors' editions of the first two films, a new story idea, and some renewed interest from star Sigourney Weaver now indicate that an *Alien 4* could be made after all. And the fact that *Aliens* director James Cameron might also be on board suggests it could be a decent movie too.

"I miss Ripley a bit these days," admits Sigourney Weaver. "We've lived together for 15 years, and I'm extremely fond of her. All those years, I did whatever I had to preserve her dignity and integrity. That's the reason we decided to kill her in *Alien*³ – I didn't want this unique character to get dragged through scripts where she just fights one monster after another. I thought that letting Ripley go would enable the series to explore new ideas."

"I didn't want Ripley dragged through scripts where she just fights one monster after another – letting her go would enable the series to explore new ideas."

But things change, and now Weaver's happy to consider reprising the role: "If they come up with a nice idea, I'd be more than happy to get back aboard. If it's not for *Alien 4*, it could be for *Alien 5*."

The plan to bring Ripley back has been actively pursued for the past year by Walter Hill and David Giler, the two main creators of the *Alien* series. So how are they planning to bring back someone who's plunged into a sea of molten lead?

"It's very intriguing," Weaver offers, teasingly. "They've imagined that the Company manages to save a few fingers of Ripley from the furnace, so they use the DNA from these to clone her back. But what I like above all is the idea that lies behind all this. Ripley committed suicide because there was no other way out. But in the future they can deny you this supreme act; they will bring you back to life even if you don't want it. If the script can develop this issue and be thought-provoking at the same time, we can talk."

Weaver still remains enthusiastic about the series, despite the difficulties she had making *Alien*³: "They easily stand apart because the story concept was so original... I'm convinced Ripley is a unique character in film history. There has never been anybody quite like her. On the inside, we're not much alike – she's strong and brave. But she can help – some time ago, I was trapped in an elevator and started to panic. The minute I started pretending I was Ripley, things got cool."

PRODUCTION HELL

(Or movies we may see. One day.)

Edited by **Steve Holland**

Production Hell is SFX's round-up of sci-fi and fantasy films currently in development. Some of these movies have been wallowing in prod hell for some time, and are unlikely to ever reach the screen; others are likely to undergo substantial changes prior to filming. Production Hell will be updated every issue as we get more info. Details correct at time of going to press. For a longer, more detailed version of this list, check out the SFX Website at

http://www.futurenet.co.uk

Key: Dir – Director; Scr – Scriptwriter; ExPrd – Executive Producer; Prd Producer; St – Starring.

AFTERLIFE (Columbia). Scr Joss *(Buffy the Vampire Slayer)* Whedon. ExPrd Ned & Nancy Graham Turner. Prd Denise De Novi. The story – a terminally ill scientist transfers his mind into the body of a serial killer – cost the studio $1.5 million. Jean-Claude Van Damme has been linked, and the budget, set at $40 million. Should start shooting mid-'95.

A.I. (Warner). Stanley Kubrick's movie about Artificial Intelligence has been in development since '89, but moved to the front of Kubrick's slate in late '93. Set in the future, *A.I.* features a world ravaged by global warming– the ice caps have melted, drowning many major cities and creating new shorelines – and populated by intelligent robots. Concept and design work for the film is expected to take at least two years.

ALIEN 4 (20th Century Fox). A long-touted script by Peter Riggs for an *Aliens vs Predator* movie has since been superseded by a Joss Whedon story in which the *Aliens* (at last!) come to Earth. Sigourney Weaver has been offered $5 million to reprise her role as Ripley. (See news story above.)

APOLLO 13 (Imagine Entertainment). Dir Ron Howard. Scr Bill Broyles. ExPrd Todd Hallowell. Prd Brian Grazer. St Tom Hanks, Kevin Bacon, Bill Paxton, Kathleen Quinlan, Gary Sinise, Ed Harris. First mooted as "Lost Moon", *Apollo 13* is based on James A Lovell's non-fiction book about the near disastrous 13th Apollo mission which left three astronauts stranded in space. Hanks plays Lovell. Shooting began in Los Angeles on 15 August '94. The film will be released on 30 June.

THE APOCALYPSE (EGM Film International). Dir Robert Skotak. Low-budget futuristic actioner all set to start shooting in June in Los Angeles. Skotak was the special effects co-ordinator on James Cameron's *Terminator 2, The Abyss* and *Aliens*, and, most recently, on *Batman Returns*.

BARB WIRE (Propaganda Films/Dark Horse Entertainment). St Pamela Anderson. $8 million actioner based on the *Dark Horse* comic strip vigilante.

BATMAN FOREVER (Warner Bros). Dir Joel Schumacher. Scr Lee Batchelor, Janet Batchelor, Akiva Goldman. ExPrd Tim Burton, Benjamin Melniker, Michael Uslan. Prd Peter MacGregor-Scott. St Val Kilmer, Tommy Lee Jones, Jim Carrey, Chris O'Donnell, Nicole Kidman, Drew Barrymore, Michael Gough, Pat Hingle, Debi Mazar, Ed Begley Jr. Principal shooting for the movie began in New York on 21 September 1994 and subsequently relocated to Los Angeles. The film is currently scheduled for 16 June release in the USA, with a UK debut on 14 July. The trailer looks excellent.

BATTLETECH (New Line). Live-action SF based on the role-playing game about giant battle mechanoids.

CATWOMAN (Warner). Dir Tim Burton. Scr Dan Waters. Michelle Pfeiffer will reprise her role from *Batman Returns*.

CONCRETE (Universal). Scr Larry Wilson, Paul Chadwick. Prd Lawrence Gordon. Based on Chadwick's ingenious comic character, who debuted in *Dark Horse Presents #1*. Wilson & Chadwick's script has been around for several years now. Should go into production in 1995, budgeted at $25 million.

CONGO (Paramount). Dir Frank Marshall. Scr Michael Crichton, John Patrick Shanley. ExPrd Frank Marshall, Frank Yablans. Prd Kathleen Kennedy.

So who is... LARRY NIVEN?

Briefly: American science fiction writer who started writing short stories for *If* magazine in the '60s, now best known for his *Ringworld* series of books.

Is he any good? Well, he has won both Hugo and Nebula science fiction awards.

Major works: *Ringworld, The Ringworld Engineers, World Of Ptavvs, The Long ARM of Gil Hamilton, A Hole In Space, Protector, The Integral Trees.*

What's he like? Lots of hard science; oodles of possible futures. There are no flights of fancy in Niven's work – his scientific principles are cast iron, his physics spot-on. However, it's not all dry as dust. His near-future writing explores a world separated from ours by the thinnest of membranes – you'd recognise it, maybe even feel at home there. One of his stories has his most famous protagonist, a 200 year old human named Louis Wu, solving a problem by working out that the tiny reflective sphere he has seen in orbit must be the fantastically dense star-stuff neutronium. How? Because the planet he's on has tides, but no moon. The sphere is the only thing in orbit, and must therefore be causing the tides. Ergo, it must weigh a lot. See?

Key themes: Science related, but always with a human angle. The key point seems to be that even when technology advances almost to the point of near-magic, human problems will remain painfully familiar.

Buzzwords: Organlegging, wireheads, ringworlds, Dyson spheres, teleportation, Tanj it!, the Teela Brown Gene, Pierson's Puppeteers, the Kzinti, plateau eyes, the Grogs, Belters (they're asteroid miners, by the way).

Suggested reading: *Ringworld*, an epic tale involving aliens, ancient civilisations and (eek!) the end of the galaxy, all set on an artificial ring in space with the same surface area as six million earths. Yes, it's really rather good.

Paul Thomason

Man fights shark

Explosive action on the set of UK horrorfest *Proteus*. Report by **Matt Bielby**.

Yes, you're right, it *is* that guy out of *London's Burning*. To be more specific, it's Craig Fairbrass, familiar face from TV's first *Prime Suspect, Cliffhanger* (where he played a terrorist football thug) and *Beyond Bedlam*, and the guy who's fast on his way to becoming Britain's answer to Van Damme. And the film that might do it for him is *Proteus*, a sci-fi horror thriller currently shooting – and, no, we're not making this up – just behind a Tesco in East London.

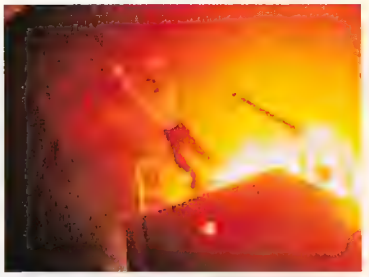
Set on a mysterious oil rig, where genetic engineering has created a terrifying half-man, half-shark creature, *Proteus* is described by its producer, Paul Brooks, as *"Aliens meets The Thing meets Die Hard meets The Hidden"* – a heady brew, and very ambitious for a $4 million, largely British made and financed picture.

Craig plays a British cop, who, on a mission to track down a gang of American heroin smugglers, ends up trapped alongside them on the doomed rig. Much action ensues, with every technique, from full-sized puppets to morphing, utilised to create a believable shape-changing shark monster.

"What we really want to do is constantly boo the audience," says director Bob Keen, better known for his special effects work on films like *The Empire Strikes Back, Return of the Jedi, Highlander, Interview with the Vampire* and *Judge Dredd*. "It's a big rollercoaster ride of a movie, with all the twists and turns you'd expect." As to whether he's succeeded or not, you'll have to wait until 1996, when *Proteus* – based, incidentally, on the Harry Adam Knight novel *Slimer* – goes on general release. To bide you over till then, though, we'll have a full *Proteus* location report in SFX 2.

Craig Fairbrass, ex-*London's Burning* and *Cliffhanger* star, in his first major role in an action film. He plays a British cop caught up in an *Aliens*-style scenario aboard an oil rig.

London-based American actress Toni Barry stars as the female lead in *Proteus*.



Boom! You'd never guess this *Die Hard*-style explosion was shot just behind Tescos!

Instead of filming aboard a real oil rig, the *Proteus* crew built their own instead.

Sam Mercer. St Dylan Walsh, Laura Linney, Ernie Hudson, Tim Curry, Grant Heslov. Based on the novel by Crichton about a search for a lost city in Africa, shot mostly in Costa Rica and Uganda. Due for release in the USA on 9 June.

CONTACT (Warner). Dir George (Mad Max) Miller. Prd Linda Obst, George Miller, Doug Mitchell. St Jodie Foster. Big budget version of Carl Sagan's novel about first contact between humans and extraterrestrials.

CRASH (Recorded Picture Co.). Dir/Scr David Cronenberg. Prd Jeremy Thomas. Based on the novel by JG Ballard. Medium-budget British production.

THE CHRYSALIDS (Samuelson Productions). Scr Stephen Volk. Prd Marc Samuelson, Peter Samuelson, Philip Gerlach. Based on the (excellent) novel by John Wyndham.

CYBORG COP 3 (NU Image). Dir Yossi Wein. St Frank Zagarino, Bryan Genesse. Was due to be completed in April 1995, but could slip.

DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS (MGM). Dir/Scr: Tom (Fright Night) Holland. John Wyndham's classic novel gets the big budget treatment.

THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE (Winchester Pictures/Schindler-Swerdlow Productions). Dir Jan de Bont. Scr Robert & Ashley Sidaway. ExPrd Roy Skeggs. Prd Ezra Swerdlow, Deborah Schindler. A remake of the 1962 Val Guest classic. Renny Harlin *(Cliffhanger)* was long attached to the movie and rumoured to already have some stock footage in the can, taken during the fire that swept Malibu in November 1993. However, commitments to *Cutthroat Island* forced him to back out, and the movie then passed to de Bont, who himself had recently quit *Godzilla*. Backed by 20th Century Fox, the film has a $40 million budget and should begin shooting in 1995, after de Bont's *Twister*.

DEATH MACHINE (Trimark). Dir/Scr Steve Norrington. St Brad Dourif. This has been granted an R rating for violence and language.

DEEP IMPACT. Scr Bruce Joel Rubin (Ghost). Prd David Brown, Richard Zanuck, Steven Spielberg. Based on Arthur C Clarke's well-known novel *The Hammer of God*.

DIGITAL MAN (Republic Entertainment). A likely straight to video candidate. Due for release soon.

DINOSAUR VALLEY GIRLS (Frontline Productions). Dir/Prd Donald F Glut. Scr Glut, Kevin M Glover. ExPrd Daniel J Mellen. St Jeff Rector, Ed Furey. Filming was meant to start on 1 April – it could almost be a joke: Glut is a horror/SF writer, most notable for penning the novelisation of *The Empire Strikes Back*.

DINOTOPIA. Scr Linda (The Lion King) Woolverton. Based on the best-selling (in the US) picture novel by James Gurney.

DRAGONHEART (Draco Productions/Universal). Dir Rob Cohen. Scr Charles Pogue. ExPrd Patrick Read Johnson, David Rotman. Prd Raffaella De Laurentiis. St Dennis Quaid, David Thewlis, Dina Meyer, Peter Postlethwaite, Julie Christie. Bowen, a knight in the 10th century, joins forces with the last dragon, Draco (computer generated and voiced by Sean Connery), to defeat the evil tyrant, Einon.

ESCAPE FROM LOS ANGELES. Dir John Carpenter. St Kurt Russell. Russell may reprise his role as Snake Plisskin in this follow-up to *Escape From New York*, although it's a long way off.

EXPECT NO MERCY (Alliance). Dir Zale Dalen. Scr J. Stephen Maunder. Prd Jalal Merhi. St Billy Blanks, Jalal Merhi, Wolf Larson, Laurie Holden, Anthony De Longis, Michael Blanks. VR thriller.

FAHRENHEIT 451 (Icon Productions). A remake, but this time scripted by Ray Bradbury.

FANTASTIC FOUR (Fox) Dir Chris Columbus (Home Alone, Mrs Doubtfire). Based on the Marvel comic characters. Columbus was originally slated to direct *Daredevil*, although the FF movie now looks definitely on. An earlier FF flick, shot by Roger Corman's Concorde Films over December/January 1992/3, was completed, but shelved in order to free the way for the Columbus version. It's unlikely ever to be seen.

Slide away

Slider's doing fine in the States – and coming our way this Autumn, courtesy of Sky, writes **MJ Simpson**.

***Sliders* stars, from left to right, Wade Wells (as Sabrina Lloyd), Jerry O'Connell (as Quinn Mallory), Cleavent Derricks (as Rembrandt "Crying Man" Brown) and sci-fi old hand John Rhys-Davies (as Maximillian Arturo) as the team who "slide" between parallel worlds.**

Decently-budgeted TV SF is a rarity in England. But in the States, you can't move for the stuff. One of the more recent American ventures to make it over here is *Sliders*, a tale of parallel worlds and a small group of characters who somehow manage to "slide" between them.

Jerry O'Connell *(Stand By Me)* stars as Quinn Mallory, a genius college student who first discovers the "sliding" technique, along with John Rhys-Davies (from the *Indiana Jones* movies), who plays his physics professor Maximillian Arturo, and Wade Wells, who plays computer whizz (and love interest) Sabrina Lloyd. The final member of the quartet is Rembrandt "Crying Man" Brown (Cleavent Derricks), a passing soul singer who's accidentally caught in the first "slide," and thus fulfils a sort of "Dr Zachary Smith" role.

Although the idea of parallel "alternative" worlds is pretty old hat in science fiction, its use as a TV series plot device is something of a novelty. It fits *Sliders* into the recurring-characters-in-a-brand-new-situation-each-week genre popularised by the likes of *The Fantastic Journey, The Time Tunnel* and *Quantum Leap*. Among the alternative worlds encountered in the series are a matriarchal society, a British States of America, and a world without nuclear energy that's threatened by an approaching asteroid.

Sliders was created by Robert K Weiss (producer of *The Naked Gun* movies) and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* writer Tracy Torme, and produced by St Clare Entertainment, the people who brought us the excellent *Dream On*. John Landis is the executive producer.

The series debuted on the Fox Network in March. It's recently been bought by Sky for probable broadcast in the Autumn.

You get this scene every week in *Sliders* – Rhys-Davies and co looking shocked as they end up in yet another parallel world.

This just in...

Gump beats *Star Wars?*

Tom Hanks' Oscar-winning opus – directed by Robert *(Back To The Future, Who Framed Roger Rabbit?)* Zemeckis, has now overtaken George Lucas' baby as the third biggest grossing film ever in the USA. Only the Spielberg double-act, *Jurassic Park* and *ET*, have taken more than *Gump*, which has now clocked over $325 million in its home market ($640 million worldwide).

Gump's high position may be short-lived, of course. When the much vaunted revamp of *Star Wars: A New Hope* (the original movie) eventually appears, it's likely to leap-frog all three of the above films to regain its rightful position as the most successful movie ever made.

New *Who* – on cassette

While we continue to await new *Doctor Who* episodes or films (see page 34), the BBC is already fishing around for new *Who* merchandise to sell. The latest is a series of abridged readings of *Doctor Who* novelisations released by the BBC Spoken Word Collection in June. The first two single-cassette releases are *Planet Of The Daleks* and *Warriors Of The Deep*, followed by *The Curse Of Peladon* in July. Each story is read by the relevant Doctor.

Missing classics No.1

One film you probably *won't* be seeing soon is *Zombie God Squad*, in which a group of recently deceased Salvation Army workers are resurrected to continue spreading the good word. The role of Sally Ally founder William Booth was originally slated for Peter Cook, whose death earlier this year has put the project on indefinite ice. Shame.

Is this the next *Akira?*

Japanese animation – or anime – makes another leap forward in October when a major new anime movie is released simultaneously in Europe, the USA and Japan. *Ghost In The Shell* is being produced by the Kodansha group, whose previous successes include *Oh My Goddess!* and the seminal *Akira*. *Ghost In The Shell* deals with a computerised police force and features the usual mix of cybertechnology and large-eyed, long-legged young ladies. Directed by Mamoru Oshii, it's based on a popular comic strip by Masamune Shirow, who also wrote *Dominion Tank Police*.

When it premièred in September '93, the Amblin/MCA co-production *seaQuest DSV* was already in choppy waters. Launched on the back of an unprecedented network deal – which tied NBC into funding not just the usual first half-season of 13 episodes, but a full pair of 22 (later 24) show seasons – *seaQuest* had already been broadsided by TV critics, predicting the series should be renamed, in tribute to the last great network submarine show, "Voyage to the Bottom of the Ratings."

Not everyone agreed. Steven Spielberg's Amblin Television, desperate for big success after so-so efforts like *The Young indiana Jones Chronicles* (with Lucasfilm) and *Amazing Stories*, had certainly pinned all its hopes on the show, using state-of-the-art computer graphics engines to create stunning underwater effects sequences.

Like *Star Trek* and – yes – *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, it threw a mixed bunch of characters into adventure after adventure aboard a futuristic craft. In this case, though, the year was 2018 and the craft – seaQuest, a new supersub – given an unashamedly green mission to keep the seas safe and clean.

An ambitious project, then – and on first showing it did well too, sharply silencing its detractors by going straight in at number one, even up against such favourites as *Murder She Wrote* and that other contender, *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*.

Drawing on the experiences of real-life oceanographer and submariner Dr Bob Ballard, *seaQuest* provided a unique mix of near-future high-concept drama and real life issues – "science faction rather than science fiction," said Spielberg – and for a while the ratings stayed buoyant. Indeed, boasting a cast headed by veteran movie actor Roy Scheider in his first TV role as Captain Nathan Bridger, and featuring a unique character in the shape of talking dolphin Darwin, *seaQuest* seemed to show all the potential to run and run.

All was not rosy at *seaQuest* central, however. The show was plagued with internal problems from the start: co-creators Rockne *(Alien Nation, The New Twilight Zone)* O'Bannon and Tommy *(Quantum Leap)* Thompson quickly fell out with Scheider and Spielberg, O'Bannon departing after the

FINAL EQUINOX (Triad). Dir Serge Rodnunsky. Prd Jimmy Lifton. St Joe Lara, David Warner, Vincent Klyn, Martin Kove. Set several years in the future; a cop is called in when an ancient artefact falls into the wrong hands. Due in 1995.

FIRST KNIGHT (Columbia). Dir Jerry Zucker. Scr William Nicholson, Lorne Cameron, David Hoselton. ExPrd Eric Rattray, Gil Netter. Prd Hunt Lowry. St Sean Connery (Arthur), Richard Gere (Lancelot), Julia Ormond, Ben Cross, Sir John Gielgud, Ralph Ineson, Liam Cunningham, Chris Villiers, Valentine Pelka, Jane Robbins, Jean Marie Coffey. Began shooting 25 July 1994 for 16 weeks at Pinewood and in Wales. Due to open in the US on 26 May and in the UK on 7 July.

FIST OF THE NORTHSTAR (Zeta Entertainment). Dir Tony Randel. St Gary Daniels, Costas Mandylor, Chris Penn, Isako Washio, Melvyn Van Peebles, Downtown Julie Brown, Malcolm McDowell. Based on a manga strip and animated series. No release date yet.

FLASH GORDON. Prd Ben Myron, David Halpern. David S Goyer has already written the first draft of the script.

FORBIDDEN PLANET (Corlind Motion Picture Co.). Dir Irwin *(The Empire Strikes Back)* Kershner. Scr Stirling Silliphant, Nelson Gidding. ExPrd Stan Winston. Prd Lindsay Dunlap. This remake of the 1956 classic was due to start production in London on 31 October 1994. The date has since drifted.

FOUNDATION. David Henry Hwang's adaptation of Isaac Asimov's classic series. Director Jean-Jacques Annaud has been linked to the project.

GODZILLA (TriStar). Scr Terry Rossio & Ted Elliott. ExPrd Barrie M Osborne, Ian Bryce. Prd Cary Woods, Rob Fried. Jan de Bont was the original director, but he fell out with TriStar when his vision, which would have involved a great deal of computer generated effects, pushed the projected cost to $130 million. TriStar wants to limit the budget to $100 million. Production began in March.

GOLDENEYE (Eon Productions/United Artists). Dir Martin Campbell. Scr Bruce Feirstein, ExPrd Tom Pevsner. Prd Michael Wilson, Barbara Broccoli. St Pierce Brosnan, Judi Dench, Robbie Coltrane, Sean Bean, Famke Janssen, Samantha Bond. Shooting was delayed because of problems with the original screenplay by Michael France & Jeffrey Caine, but is now back on course for a 22 November release date.

GRIDIRON (Working Title). Rights to Philip Kerr's novel about a high-tech building which turns on its creator and occupants (to be published in the UK on 8 June by the new division of PolyGram Working Title's parent company) have been acquired for $1 million.

GROUND ZERO (Castle Rock). Dir Fraser (Needful Things) Heston. Scr Sergio Altieri & Martin Zurla. A couple have to stop a disenchanted employee of an underground military base hot-wiring a nuclear missile.

HACKERS (HAC). Dir/ExPrd Iain (Backbeat) Softley. Scr Rafael Moreau. Prd Ralph Winter, Michael Peyser. St Alberta Watson, Lorraine Bracco, Johnny Lee Miller, Angelina Jolie, Renoly Santiago, Jesse Bradford, Matthew Lillard, Laurence Mason, Fisher Stevens, Wendell Pierce, Marc Anthony. Best described as a smaller-scale version of *WarGames* with a mostly unknown cast of teenagers who surf corporate computer nets and become involved in a dangerous game of industrial espionage. Began its 11-week shoot in New York on 17 September last year before moving to Pinewood in October where it wrapped on 10 December. Should air in the USA in September.

INDEPENDENCE DAY Dir Roland Emmerich. Scr Emmerich, Dean Devlin. ExPrd Roland Emmerich, Ute Emmerich. Alien invasion tale still being considered by the team who produced *Stargate*.

THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD (Kennedy-Marshall/Scholastic/Paramount). Dir Frank Oz. Scr Melissa Mathison. ExPrd Bernie Williams, Robert Harris, Martin Keltz. Prd Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Jane Startz. St Hal Scardino, Litefoot, Lindsay Crouse, Richard Jenkins, Rishi Bhat, Steve Coogan, David Keith, Ryan Olson, Vincent Kartheiser. Shooting began in Los Angeles and New York on 15 September

Sea change

It started out a big, expensive, high profile production. But viewers fled in droves, and the second season, still unshown in the UK, saw a complete revamp. But is it enough to save *seaQuest DSV* from (cue crass journalistic device) sinking beneath the waves, wonders **Jim Swallow**.

Spot the difference: The first season *seaQuest* team (left) face up to their "younger, fitter" season two replacements. Out go Stephanie Beacham, Royce D Applegate and the other wrinklies, in comes a Sean Connery beard for Scheider and Rosalind Allen in a skimpy wetsuit.

pilot, and Thompson after the third episode. Directors came and went too, before the show finally settled down under producer David Burke.

In the UK, *seaQuest* has had an even more checkered history. Stateside, it had aired on a prime-time Sunday night slot; here, the ITV networks cut and trimmed it for its late afternoon/early evening slot (removing over 20 minutes from the pilot episode), and only ever showed programmes in sporadic bursts. Ratings were never good on either side of the Atlantic, but even in the US its popularity were already starting to slip by the end of the first season. So rather than end on a cliffhanger, the season went out with a bang in "Higher Power," with Bridger purposefully piloting the sub into a magma fissure. It looked like the end for *seaQuest*...

It was quite a surprise, then, when plans for a second season were announced – albeit with substantial changes... Season one rating drops were seen by MCA and Amblin as evidence of a loss of the late-teen/early-'20s market, so a cast shake-up was inevitable. Out went John D'Aquino as Ben Krieg, the wise-guy morale officer, Stacy Haiduk, Chief Engineer Kathy Hitchcock, Royce D Applegate as Manilow Crocker, the old salt security chief, and Stephanie Beacham as Dr Kristen Westphalen, doctor and love interest for Bridger. The end result? The older crew members (with the exception of Scheider) were replaced by younger faces. Twentysomethings Don Franklin, playing Commander Ford, Ted Raimi (O'Neill) and Marco Sanchez (Ortiz) stayed, as did heartthrob hacker Lucas Wolenczak (Jonathan Brandis). Indeed, Brandis had been so successful pulling teenagers to the show that rival *Lois and Clark* got a new, Brandis-like Jimmy Olsen – Justin Whalen – for its second season.

And to fill in the newly created gaps came Rosalind Allen as Dr Wendy Smith, Michael DeLuise as the gill-equipped Tony Piccoloc, Kathy Evison as the naïve ensign Lonnie Henderson, Edward Kerr as cocky hotshot James Brody and Peter DeLuise as the gentle giant janitor Dagwood.

The stories took on a more fantastical bent too, reflecting the changes in the characters. Gone was the "science faction" and in its place came more bizarre, often hokey, plots. If people wanted *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, that was what they were going to get. In a recent interview, Roy Scheider voiced his dislike of the new storylines, citing the wackier episodes as desperate attempts to curry favour with viewers and the network powers.

With the second season now drawing to a close in America, the future looks bleak for *seaQuest* – licencees have withdrawn or cancelled merchandise and toy deals through lack of confidence, and the ratings have slipped even lower. Here in the UK, the series has been bought by the ITV stations, but hasn't been shown yet – quite when it'll go on air, and whether it'll be in the same time slot in all areas, has yet to be decided.

The sad fact is that the changes haven't so much plugged the leaks as opened up new ones. Amblin and MCA's stay of execution given by the two-season deal with NBC has reached its end, and it seems likely that *seaQuest*, a show with the potential to stand proudly alongside the best of TV SF, may soon vanish altogether.

"TV critics predicted the series should be renamed, in tribute to the last great network submarine show, *'Voyage to the Bottom of the Ratings'*."

last year. A young boy secretly creates a fantasy world after discovering his toys come to life when he places them in a cupboard. Released in the UK soon.

INDIANA JONES 4 Dir Steven Spielberg. Scr Jeb (*The Fugitive*) Stuart. A long-awaited Lucas-Spielberg continuation of the Harrison Ford series. Should be ready for Summer '96.

INVISIBLE KIDS (Dalton Films). Dir Iren Koster. Scr Iren Koster, Tracey Silvers. Prd Chris Dalton, Tracey Silvers. St Cathy Henderson, Tom McSweeney. $10 million *Honey, I Made the Kids See-Through* flick that was due to begin shooting in Los Angeles on 15 November last year, but was then delayed until February '95.

THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU (Ed Pressman/New Line). Dir Richard Stanley. Scr Walen Green, Michael Hare, Richard Stanley. Prd Ed Pressman. St Marlon Brando, Gary Oldman. This new adaptation of the HG Wells novel was due to start production in April '95.

JOHNNY MNEMONIC (20th Century Fox). Dir Robert Longo. Scr William Gibson. Prd Don Carmody. St Keanu Reeves, Dolph Lundgren, Ice-T, Takeshi Kitano. $36 million budget, based on Gibson's short story. Filming began in February of last year and was originally to open in January '95. However, Reeves' success in *Speed* has now pushed back that release date to 9 June. The film premièred in Japan in April.

JONNY QUEST (Turner Pictures). Co-Prd Lauren Shuler-Donner. Due Summer 1996. Based on the animated US TV show.

JUDGE DREDD (Cinergi Pictures Entertainment Inc/Edward R. Pressman Productions). Dir Danny Cannons. Scr John Fasano, Steven E. De Souza. ExPrd Andy Vajna, Edward R. Pressman. Prd Charles Lippincott, Beau Marks. St Sylvester Stallone, Armand Assante, Diane Lane, Rob Schneider, Joan Chen, Jurgen Prochnow, Balthazar Getty, Scott Wilson, Joanna Miles, Max Von Sydow. Released 30 June in the US and 21 July in the UK. See page 9 for more.

JUMANJI (TriStar). Dir Joe (*Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*) Johnston. Scr Jonathan Hensleigh. ExPrd Ted Field, Robert Cort, Larry Franco, Scott Kroopf, Bill Teitler. St Robin Williams, Kirsten Dunst, Bonnie Hunt. Based on the children's novel by Chris Van Allburg. A young boy trapped in a jungle board game is freed 25 years later, but deadly creatures follow him and threaten the town. Williams' reputed price was $15 million; the total cost of the enterprise around $50 million. Due out for Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November) or Christmas 1995.

THE KILLER TONGUE (Factory Pictures/Lola Films/Iberoamericana). Dir/Scr Alberto Sciamma. ExPrd Michael Cowan, Jason Piette. Prd Christopher Figg, Joseph D'Morais. St Bruce Campbell, Robert Englund, Alaska Gara. $3 million British/Spanish co-produced SF-comedy currently aimed to roll sometime in 1995.

LAWNMOWER MAN 2: JOBE'S WAR (Lane-Pringle Productions/Allied Vision). Dir Farhad Mann. Scr Michael Meyer. ExPrd Steve Lane, Robert Pringle, Peter McRae. Prd Edward Simons, Keith Fox. St Patrick Bergin, Ely Pouget, Austin O'Brien. $15 million sequel to the effects driven story of a retarded gardener's education through VR. Currently in post-production.

LEGACY (Winchester Pictures/Trilogy Ent.). Scr Ashley Sideway, Caroline Beecham. A remake of Hamme Horror's 1968 *Quatermass and the Pit*, and backed by MGM.

LUKE CAGE Dir John Singleton. Scr Joe Doughrity. ExPrd Bradford Smith. Prd Ed Pressman, Singleton. Based on the Marvel character Power Man, a black superhero for hire. An earlier script was by Ron Friedman, supervising producer of the *Marvel Action Hour* animated series.

MANSLAYER Prd Steven Menkin, Stuart S Shapiro. Based on Jay R Bonaninga's novel, *The Black Mariah*, about a female psychiatrist who morphs into a comic book character. Shooting started on 15 April.

MARAUDER (Triad). Dir Phil (*Invaders*) Cook. Prd Jimmy Lifton. Future war between USA and Canada using machines. Set to shoot sometime in 1995.

THE MASK 2 (New Line). St Jim Carrey.

It's the New York cops in space!

Gerry Anderson's latest series is doing well on Sky, but its future looks unclear elsewhere. **Matt Bielby** assesses the situation.

The vast numbers of alien creatures – like this fella – in true starring roles accounts for much of the appeal of *Space Precinct*.

Currently showing on Sky One – where it's pulling in good ratings – and due on the BBC this Autumn, *Space Precinct* is the latest project from Brit sci-fi mainstay Gerry Anderson. It's been ten years in the making – the original pilot, a less ambitious, more kiddy-orientated version of the same idea entitled *Space Police*, was put together back in 1986 – and sees an Anderson series back on the box for the first time since *Dick Spanner* in the late '80s.

While *Space Precinct* has much in common with past Gerry Anderson productions – chiefly in terms of the spaceship special effects, which have an endearingly old-fashioned, explosions-a-go-go look about them – it is, at heart, a different type of show. The futuristic secret agent shenanigans of such programmes as *Captain Scarlet* and *UFO* have been replaced by a more gritty, street-wise look – more *NYPD Blue* than James Bond.

American actors Ted Shackelford and Rod Youngblood take the lead roles, along with an assortment of Brits in support. Much the same set-up as on previous live action Anderson shows, like *UFO* and *Space: 1999*, you may think, but the difference here is that our heroes aren't meant to be anything special – they're mere beat cops.

While it's an expensive production, at least by UK TV standards – $36 million for 24 hour-long episodes is the oft-quoted figure – *Space Precinct* still looks like it could have done with a bigger budget. The big problem has obviously been trying to shoot street scenes in the *Blade Runner*-like city it's set in when you don't have a *Blade Runner*-like budget. The result: nearly all the action – flying-car chases and explosions aside – is done on fairly small sets. The show could simply be too ambitious for its own good.

Still, in its favour, Anderson's latest has tons of good alien make-up (many of the main cast wear full latex prosthetics throughout, for instance), and things never hang around for long – this is a fast, snappy show, and it's easy to ignore such foibles as tiny sets and indifferent acting when you're being whisked along at such a pace. Anderson himself claims *Space Precinct* is aimed at adults, but it's not really – it's certainly a broader, far less serious project than *Babylon 5* or any of the *Star Treks* (even *The New Adventures of Superman* look grown up in comparison), but that's not necessarily a bad thing. On its own terms, it's a positive hoot.

Although the show has yet to be seen on terrestrial TV in the UK, its future as a series already looks unclear. The first season recently finished shooting at Pinewood – curiously enough, on the same soundstages Anderson used for *Space: 1999* back in 1975 – but whether a second season will be commissioned or not remains unclear. It's a shame, but history (few Anderson projects ever made more than one series) and cost certainly seem to weigh against it.

Look, you can see the strings!

Well, sort of. A whole batch of *Space Precinct* models are on their way at any rate. Could this be a *Thunderbirds* Christmas all over again?, asks Mike Reccia.

The action figure market has enjoyed brisk trading over the last couple of years, and encouraged a real collectors' mentality – so much so that used figures and playsets from series such as *Star Wars, Star Trek* and *Aliens* regularly change hands at many times their original prices mere months after their withdrawal from high-street stores.

Until now this whole area has been – *Thunderbirds* and a few other toy lines aside – mostly US-dominated, but from late Summer British toy manufacturer Vivid Imaginations will enter the fray with a set of toys based on Gerry Anderson's *Space Precinct*, the first major science fiction TV show to be lensed in the UK for years.

Over the first six months, 12 blister-packed, fully articulated mini action figures, each complete with accessories and a "data card," will be released for £3.99 each. These will include Lieutenant Brogan in Street Combat Gear, Officer Haldane, Officer Castle, bug-eyed Precinct supremo Captain Podley, Sergeant Fredo, Officer Took, Slomo the robot, and Cyborg, Morgo and the Snake.

If *Space Precinct* does well when it appears on BBC 2 later in the year, this new toy and model range could be a huge Christmas hit.

The Space Cruiser – the flying police car featured in every episode – will be available separately as a boxed toy for £34.99. Vivid Imaginations had access to a prototype series model when planning its version, and worked closely with the model effects department during its development. It should therefore be a highly accurate representation of the principle craft – and, as such, of interest both kids and more "mature" Anderson collectors. The cruiser will feature electronic lights and sirens, laser cannons, a jail-trap for villains and grab-bars. A police "bike," with laser cannon, will also be available at £7.99.

But that's not all. Lieutenant Brogan, the hero of the series, played by ex-*Dallas*/*Knots Landing* star Ted (Gary Ewing) Shackleford, will also be made available as a 12" poseable action figure, complete with gun and communicator at £12.99. Finally, would-be Demeter City detectives can also track down the *Space Precinct* Crime Busters Board Game, available from August for £12.99, and again produced by Vivid Imaginations.

Carrey has just finished filming a second *Ace Ventura* and will reprise his role as Stanley Ipkiss this Summer.

MATILDA (TriStar). Dir/Prd Danny de Vito. Scr Roald Dahl, Nicholas Kazan, Robin Swicord. St Danny de Vito, Rhea Pearlman. Based on Dahl's novel about a telekinetic girl. Should now roll in the Spring. Mara Wilson could be the girl.

MATRIX (Warner). Scr Larry & Andy Wachowski. Warner's picked up the script for $1 million. The film is set in a computer-generated future world.

MEN IN BLACK (Columbia). Dir Les Mayfield. Prd Steven Spielberg, Walter Parks, Laurie MacDonald. St Tommy Lee Jones. Based on Malibu Comics series by Bill Spengler.

MORTAL KOMBAT (New Line). Dir Paul *(Shopping)* Anderson. Scr Kevin Droney. Prd Larry Kasanoff. St Christopher Lambert (Rayden), Linden Ashby, Talisa Soto, Robin Shou, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Kathleen McClellan. Currently due out in August.

MOSQUITO Dir Gary Jones. St Gunnar Hansen. Giant mosquitoes on the attack!

MUTANT CHRONICLES Dir Stephen *(Death Machine)* Norrington. Scr Philip Eisner. Prd Ed Pressman. Based on the futuristic RPG of the same name in which a team of heroes aim to save mankind.

NEMESIS 2: NEBULA (Imperial Entertainment). Dir Albert Pyun. Prd Tom Karnowski, Gary Schmoeller. St Sue Price, Tina Cote. Violent action thriller. Straight to video fare.

NET (Winkler Films). Dir Irwin Winkler. Prd Winkler, Rob Cowan. St Sandra (Speed) Bullock, Jeremy Northam, Dennis Miller, Diane Baker, Wendy Gazelle. Bullock plays an agoraphobic computer whizz who discovers a secret that puts her life in danger. Budget was around $20 million. Due to open this Autumn.

THE NUTTY PROFESSOR Dir Tom *(Ace Ventura)* Shadyac. Scr Barry Blaustein, David Sheffield. St Eddie Murphy, Jerry Lewis. Remake of the classic comedy, originally to be directed by John Landis. Was going before the lens in November 1994.

ON THE BEACH St Rachel Ward, Bryan Brown. Australian remaking of the 1959 Gregory Peck & Ava Gardner movie, itself based on the novel by Nevil Shute.

THE PHANTOM (Robert Evans Co./Village Roadshow Pictures). Dir Joe Dante. Scr Jeffrey Boam. ExPrd Graham Burke, Greg Coote, Peter Sjoquist, Bruce Sherlock. Prd Robert Evans (Sliver). Mike Finnell. Scheduled to start in Australia last September, shooting has now been delayed until next Spring. Billy *(Dead Calm, Tombstone)* Zane had been brought in as The Man Who Never Dies. Cameron *(The Mask)* Diaz also stars.

PHOENIX (Triad). Dir Troy Cook. Prd Jimmy Lifton. St Brad Dourif, Billy Drago, Stephen Nichols, William Sanderson. A peaceful mining settlement on Titus 4 is torn apart by androids. Due in 1995.

PLANET OF THE APES (20th Century Fox). Scr Terry Hayes. Prd Oliver Stone, Don Murphy. Based on the film (starring Charlton Heston) of the novel. To star Arnold Schwarzenegger. Perhaps.

PLASTIC MAN (Amblin Entertainment/Warner Bros). Dir Bryan *(Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers)* Spicer. Scr Larry Wilson. Lead will probably go to a newcomer, although the usual (and unusual) gamut of names have been suggested, including Tim Robbins, Bruce Willis and Michael Jackson. Spielberg was said to be fully behind the project.

PREDATOR 3 (20th Century Fox). Fox has recently added this to its project list.

PROTEUS (Metrodome/Victor Films). Dir Bob Keen. Scr John Brosnan. ExPrd Alan Martin, Barry Barnholtz, Victor Bateman, Alistair Waddell. Prd Paul Brooks. St Craig Fairbrass, Toni Barry, Bill Marsh, Jennifer Calvert, Robert Firth, Margot Steinberg, Ricco Ross, Nigel Pegram, Jordan Page, Doug Bradley. Based on the novel by Harry Adam Knight, this $4 million British production began a six-week shoot on 12 March.

THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT (Hammer/Donner-Shuler Donner Productions). ExPrd Roy Skeggs, Richard Donner, Prd Lauren Shuler Donner.

Let's see what's out there...

Star Trek captains compared

Star Trek Captains are a hardy breed, and with the introduction of the seductive Ms Janeway and her unfeasibly well-kept hairdo there are now enough for a round of bridge should the opportunity arise. But which one's the best? **SFX** gives you the facts.

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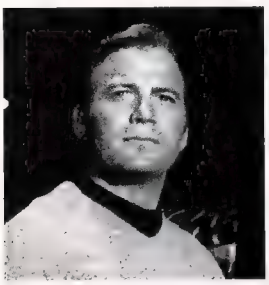

Name: James Tiberius Kirk

Known as: The original one.

Nationality: American (but played by a Canadian).

In command of: Nothing any more, him being dead and everything.

Assisted by: Crotchety doctor, smug Vulcan, "Scottish" engineer with the universe's least believable accent, etc...

Children: One illegitimate son, killed by Klingons. (Hence the popular misquote: "You Klingon son, you killed my bastard!")

Hair: It would be below SFX to make any reference to tribbles.

Catchphrase: "We come in peace, shoot to kill!" (According to *The Firm*, at any rate.)

Name: Jean-Luc Picard

Known as: The bald one.

Nationality: French (but played by an Englishman).

In command of: Enormous starship with all mod cons.

Assisted by: Humourless Klingon, naïve android, blind engineer, etc...

Children: None that we know of, but his relationship with Beverley Crusher has always smacked of Sergeant Wilson and Mrs Pike.

Hair: No.

Catchphrase: "Make it so!"

Name: Benjamin Sisko

Known as: The black one

Nationality: American (played by – at last! – an American).

In command of: Dodgy ex-Cardassian spacestation.

Assisted by: A Trill, an Irishman, and a shapeshifter who tries to look human but still can't get the nose quite right.

Children: One 16 year old son (Jake).

Hair: Short and wiry, but at least he's got some.

Catchphrase: Who knows? Nobody pays any attention anyway.

Name: Kathryn Janeway

Known as: The female one.

Nationality: American (played by an American).

In command of: Small, increasingly battered Federation starship.

Assisted by: Mixed bunch of Federation and rebel Maquis crew, plus a couple of strange aliens and a holographic doctor.

Children: None, but, oh, does she miss her dog...

Hair: Lovely, long, flowing locks, frequently attended to during battle.

Catchphrase: "Do it!" (Must have taken years to think that one up.)

Name: James Tiberius Kirk

Known as: The cartoon one.

Nationality: Toon (played by assorted animation cells).

In command of: Large, frankly two-dimensional Federation starship.

Assisted by: Animated versions of his 3D counterpart's crew, plus a few more non-humanoid aliens.

Children: Two: Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm. *(Are you absolutely sure about this? – Ed)*

Hair: Cartoon representation – but more believable than TJ Hooker's.

Catchphrase: "Draw phasers!" (Ho, ho, ho...)

Mooted remake of the 1955 TV classic written by Nigel Kneale.

SHOCKWAVE (Live Entertainment). Dir David Twohy. An astronomer discovers aliens have invaded Earth. Due to roll in Mexico in April.

SPECIES (MGM). Dir Roger (*The Getaway*) Donaldson. Scr Dennis Feldman. ExPrd David Streit. Prd Frank Mancuso Jr, Dennis Feldman. St Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Forest Whittaker, Marg Helgenberger, Alfred Molina. A murderous creature (designed by HR Giger) genetically engineered from alien and human DNA and which can assume human form does its thang. Shooting began 7 August in Nova Scotia and British Columbia, Canada. Currently due for US release on 16 June.

SPIDER-MAN (Lightstorm Entertainment/Carolco Pictures). Dir/Scr/Prd James Cameron. The latest incarnation of Marvel's comic character should go into pre-production in 1995 for a 1996 release.

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION (Paramount). With the success of *Generations* the eighth Trek movie was inevitable. This will be the first to star only the *TNG* crew, and the film already has a tentative November 1996 release date. Rick Berman has (again) been signed up to co-write and produce.

STAR WARS The original movie is to be reworked with missing footage restored (e.g. a meeting between Han Solo and Jabba the Hutt) and new special effects. The new cut is expected in February 1997.

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS George Lucas' announcement in 1994 that he was working on the prequel trilogy generated enough reports to sink a battleship. Since then, both Mark Hamill, playing the role of his own father, Anakin Skywalker, and Kenneth Branagh as Obi-Wan Kenobi, have been rumoured to be in on the project. Lucas himself is keen to direct either the first or second episode of the trilogy, set in the days of the Jedi and to be shot back-to-back.

The first film's special effects go into pre-production later this year, with a provisional release date of 1998. Frank Darabont is writing a treatment for the first film from an outline by Lucas.

THE STARS MY DESTINATION Dir Paul (*Mortal Kombat*) Anderson. Prd Bernd Eichinger, Jeremy Bolt. $50 million adaptation of Alfred Bester's classic novel. The film is set to roll this year.

STARSHIP TROOPERS (TriStar). Dir Paul Verhoeven. Scr Ed Neumeir. Prd Jon Davison. The team that brought *RoboCop* to the screen team up again to adapt Robert A Heinlein's classic novel. This should be Verhoeven's next project on completing *Showgirls*.

STEALTH FORCE (GEL Productions). Dir Jorge Montesi. Scr Mike Valerio. St Kevin Bernhardt, Brigette Nielsen. Prd Howard Barish. Based on a short-running '80s Malibu comic by Valerio, the film centres on a group of dead martial arts experts brought back to life by a mad industrialist. Bernhardt plays CIA agent John Lujack, Nielsen the secretary.

STRANGE DAYS Dir Kathryn Bigelow. Scr/Prd James Cameron, Jay Cocks. ExPrd Rae Sanchini. St Ralph Fiennes, Juliette Lewis, Vincent d'Onofrio. Erotic techno-thriller set on New Year's Eve, 1999. Early reports say it's hot.

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND (Paramount). The Hugo Award winning novel by Robert A Heinlein has Tom Hanks in the lead role.

SUPERMAN REBORN (Warner). *Superman: The New Movie* was rumoured at one point to be almost ready to shoot in Florida, but Christopher Reeves soon left the project, claiming he didn't like Cary Bates' script. Warner later announced that it had reacquired the distribution rights to all future *Superman* films. The latest news is that the film is being developed by Jon Peters from a script by Jonathan Lemkin.

T. REX (Dyo Productions). Dir/Scr Jonathan Betuel. ExPrd Stefano Ferrari. Prd Sue Baden-Powell, Richard Abramson. St Whoopie Goldberg. Whoopie stars as a cop whose partner is a dinosaur. Due out this Christmas.

TANK GIRL (Trilogy Entertainment/United Artists). Dir Rachel

Objets d'arse

18-inch Alien, by Mattel

What is it?

It's an 18" high model of the Alien (you know from the movie *Alien*), made by Mattel in the early '80s and available only on import in the UK. Based closely on Swiss artist HR Giger's nightmarish movie bogeyman, it features "spring-loaded arms to crush its prey," a "glow-in-the-dark skull," "moving jaw and tongue" and a "prehensile tail." At the time it cost around $15.

Why is it cool?

It's a genuine piece of movie memorabilia - not many actually made it into the UK. And unlike most movie tie-in toys from the period, it's well made and very detailed, even down to the six-fingered hands, dorsal tubes and skull structure beneath the removable head-shell.

Why is it sad?

It's the ugliest thing you've ever seen in your life - all tubes, teeth and weird anatomy. Even if it isn't as slimy as the movie original, this is still a genuinely nasty experience. The extending tongue is a work of twisted genius too - guaranteed to send any Action Man to an early and unpleasant death.

Verdict

A deeply unpleasant, but top artefact – and a sure-fire ice-breaker at parties. Hide it in the fridge, then sit back and watch the fun!

Paul Thomason

Superman dead?

No, of course not. He is, however, in for the fight of his life in *Superman vs Aliens*, out the same day as SFX from DC and Dark Horse. We'll have a review next ish.

This just in...

All change...

Quantum Leap **takes over the 10pm Monday to Friday slot on Sky One from** ***Deep Space Nine*** **this month. Meanwhile, the 5pm** ***Star Trek*** **slot will feature re-runs of** ***Beverly Hills 90210.*** ***Lois And Clark*** **fans may want to brave the experience for a Parisian storyline featuring Dean Cain...**

Punch in the face

Also on satellite, a pre-*The X-Files* David Duchovny can be seen hosting the supposedly erotic *Red Shoe Diaries*, a series of movies produced for American cable TV by Zalman King. King's only other claim to fame was breaking Gary Conway's nose in a method acting fist fight while guest-starring on *Land of the Giants* in his youth...

Xcellent investment

Copies of the first issue of the under-ordered *The X-Files* comic book are now exchanging hands for up to £40...

Toon Peter Parker

The new animated *Spider-Man* series on Sky will turn up on the BBC this Autumn. Spidey himself is voiced by Chris Barnes, who starred in the *Starman* series. Ed Asner of *Lou Grant* fame voices J Jonah Jameson...

About time too

BBC 2 has just bought up Gerry Anderson's *Space: 1999* – odd to think that luckless Anderson fans in some ITV regions will be getting their first ever chance to see the second season on broadcast TV, 18 years after it was made.

Oi, that's my idea!

New US network UPN, the Paramount operation airing *Star Trek: Voyager*, has *Babylon 5*'s Jim Johnston directing the pilot for *Star Command*, a new fantasy about young space cadets. I don't know what Harve Bennett, who proposed a "young Starfleet" *Star Trek* spin-off a while back, will have to say about that...

Outer Limits forever!

There have been 44 episodes of the new Outer Limits bought for BBC 2. Writers include Melinda Snodgrass (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*), and Alan Brennert (new *Twilight Zone*).

Manga on tour

Those of you who missed the recent Manga Film Festival in London can catch a selection of the films on big screens around the country over the next couple of months. Dates and locations are as follows: **Bradford (Pictureville)** 1, 2, 5 July; **Bradford (Film Theatre)** 3, 4, 6 July; **Bristol (Watershed)** 9, 10, 16, 17 June; **Dartington (Barn Theatre)** 29 June; **Dundee (Steps Theatre)** 31 May, 7 June; **Edinburgh (Film House)** 6, 11, 25 June; **Hull (Film Theatre)** 24, 31 May; **Ipswich (Film Theatre)** 2, 9, 16, 27 June; **Leicester (Phoenix)** 16, 30 June, 21, 28 July; **Newcastle (Tyneside Cinema)** 27 May; **Sheffield (Showroom)** 2, 9, 13, 16, 23, 27, 30 June; **Southampton (Harbour Lights)** 24, 31 May. Check with the actual venues nearer the time for details.

Mnemonic cyberflood

William Gibson fever has hit the film community big time. Gibson's most famous novel, *Neuromancer*, is already being touted as the next project for *Johnny Mnemonic* team Staffan Ahrenburg and Peter Hoffman, with a budget likely to exceed $50 million. Meanwhile, *Neuromancer* sequel *Count Zero* has been adapted into a screenplay called *The Zen Differential*, Ahrenburg has optioned *Virtual Light*, and Abel Ferrara is set to direct *New Rose Hotel* from his own script.

Post apocalyptic

Flora, trains – and now the great works of HG Wells. Just don't mention eugenics, okay?

Forget country flowers, endangered species and *Blue Peter* Christmas competitions designed by five year olds. The Royal Mail has finally picked a decent subject matter for its latest set of commemorative stamps – the works of HG Wells.

Launched on Tuesday 6 June, the four stamps mark the centenary of the publication of Wells' *The Time Machine*, one of the most influential science fiction novels ever written. Just think without it, there'd be no *Doctor Who*, no *Back to the Future*, and a hell of a lot less technobabble about temporal anomalies in *Star Trek*.

Designed by Siobhan Keaney, each stamp has been inspired by a different HG Wells book. *The Time Machine* gets the first class billing, 30p *The First Men In The Moon*, 35p *The War Of The Worlds* and 41p *Things To Come*. Special presentation packs featuring all four stamps, lovingly mounted on a specially designed SF-flavoured envelope, will be available from all major Post Offices.

But don't rush out and buy one just yet, because a) if you bought this issue as soon as it came out, the stamps won't be on sale yet, and b) we've got loads of presentation packs and commemorative SF stamp T-shirts to give away in a special SFX competition.

We've got 25 first prizes of T-shirts and presentation packs to chuck your way, in fact, plus 25 presentation packs as desirable runners-up prizes. To be in with a chance of winning you need to answer the following question:

What do the initials in HG Wells stand for?

a) Henry Gerald
b) Herbert George
c) Harold Geoffrey

Jot down your guess/answer on the back of a postcard or sealed-down envelope, and send it in to: **Phil Atterly, SFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.**

Phil will then pick the winners and runners-up from all the correct entries we receive (but no multiple entries please)... The closing date is **Monday 3 July.**

Talalay. Scr Tedi Sarafian, ExPrd Tom Astor, Aron Warner. Prd Richard Lewis, John Watson, Pen Densham. St Lori Petty, Malcolm McDowell, Naomi Watts, Ice-T, Jeff Kober, Reg E. Cathey, Scott Coffey, Iggy Pop, Don Harvey, Stacy Linn Rawsower, Brian Wimmer. Lori *(Point Break, A League of Their Own)* Petty plays the heroine. The rest of the cast has McDowell as Kesslee, Watts as Jet Girl, Ice-T as T-Saint, Kober as Booger, Cathey and Coffey as The Rippers, Pop as Rat Face, Harvey as Sergeant Small and Wimmer as Richard.

It's set in 2033, on an Earth devastated by an ecological cataclysm, where water is a precious commodity. Rebecca Buck (Tank Girl) leads a revolt against the evil Department of Water. Principal shooting began 21 June in White Sands, New Mexico, and the 14-week shoot wrapped on 27 September. Should be out by the time you read this – see our in-depth feature starting on page 18.

TERMINATOR 3 Dir James Cameron. St Arnold Schwarzenegger. It won't be happening for years, but the two have agreed that it *will* happen.

THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRICH (American Zoetrope/Front Page/Vanguard Films). Scr George Melrod. Prd Francis Ford Coppola. Based on the novel by Philip K Dick about a world that revolves around the use of two drugs: the oddly named Can-d and Chew-oz. Budget may reach $30 million depending on casting, and is expected to shoot in the UK.

TOTAL RECALL 2 A script exists, based on another Philip K Dick story, but little else seems to be in place.

THE 12 MONKEYS (Universal). Dir Terry Gilliam. Scr David & Janet Webb Peoples. ExPrd Bob Cavallo, Gary Levinson. Prd Charles Roven. St Bruce Willis, Brad Pitt, Madeleine Stowe, Christopher Plummer, David Morse. Time travel story: A scientist (Willis) returns from the 21st century to find the revolutionary (Pitt) who created the virus which drove the population underground. Principal shooting began on 8 February.

V FOR VENDETTA Dir Brett Leonard or Kenneth Branagh. Scr Hilary Henkin. Prd Joel Silver. Leonard was the director of *The Lawnmower Man*. Henkin's script for this film, based on the Alan Moore comic about a mysterious one-man terrorist campaign against a totalitarian future Britain, has been around for years. Alan Parker and Stephen Hopkins have both been mooted for the directorial chair in the past.

VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED (Universal). Dir John Carpenter. Scr Carpenter, David Himmelstein. ExPrd Sean Daniel, Jim Jacks, Shep Gordon, Andre Blay. Prd Michael Praeger, Sandy King. St Christopher Reeve, Kirstie Alley, Mark Hamill, Linda Kozlowski, Pippa Pearthree, Conie Forslund, Karen Kahn, Michael Pare, Thomas Dekker, Meredith Salenger, Peter Jason, Buck Flower. Remake of the 1960 George Sanders film based on the John Wyndham novel *The Midwich Cuckoos*. Shooting began in California on 12 September 1994. Due out in the UK in October.

VIRTUOSITY (Paramount). Dir Brett *(Hideaway)* Leonard. Scr Eric *(Surviving the Game)* Bernt. ExPrd Howard Koch Jr. Prd Gary Lucchesi. St Denzel Washington, Kelly Lynch, Russell Crowe. A criminal used by the police in virtual reality training sessions breaks into the real world. Michael Douglas was linked at one point. Due out in August.

VIRUS (Universal). Scr Chuck Pfarrer. Prd Gale Ann Hurd. Based on the *Dark Horse* comic. Warner also has a film titled *Virus* in the works, about a computer virus, scripted by Mark Verheiden.

WATERWORLD (King Kona Prods). Dir Kevin Reynolds. Scr Peter Rader, David Twohy, Joss Whedon. ExPrd Andrew Licht, Jeffrey Mueller. Prd Charles Gordon, John Davis, Kevin Costner. St Kevin Costner, Dennis Hopper, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Tina Majorino. Began shooting on 27 June 1994 in Hawaii... Tales of escalating costs have beleaguered this projects from the outset: it's already cost $180 million – which makes it the most expensive film ever – and is currently in post-production. Should be out in July, although the prints might still be wet...

WONDERSCOPE (WLS). Dir Ted Nicholaou. Scr Nicholaou, Dominic Taylor. Prd Philip Morris, Claire Welsh. Futuristic fantasy, due to start production in the Spring of next year.

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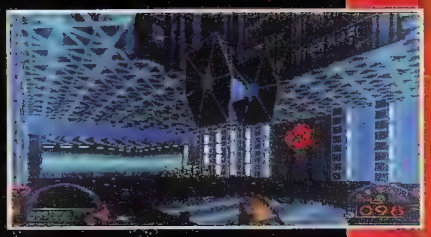
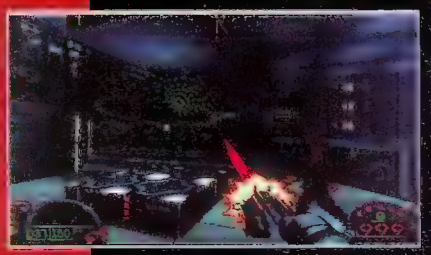
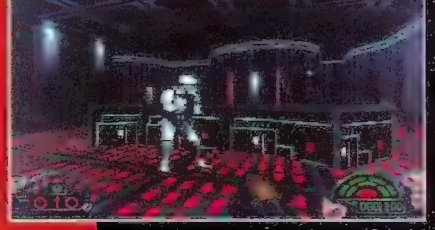
STAR WARS DARK FORCES





CAN YOU SMELL THE
FOUL STENCH
OF EVIL?
CAN YOU LOOK DEATH AND
DISTRESS IN THE FACE?
ARE YOU READY TO FACE
THE DARK SIDE ?



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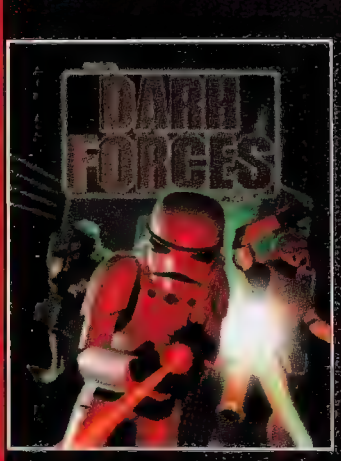

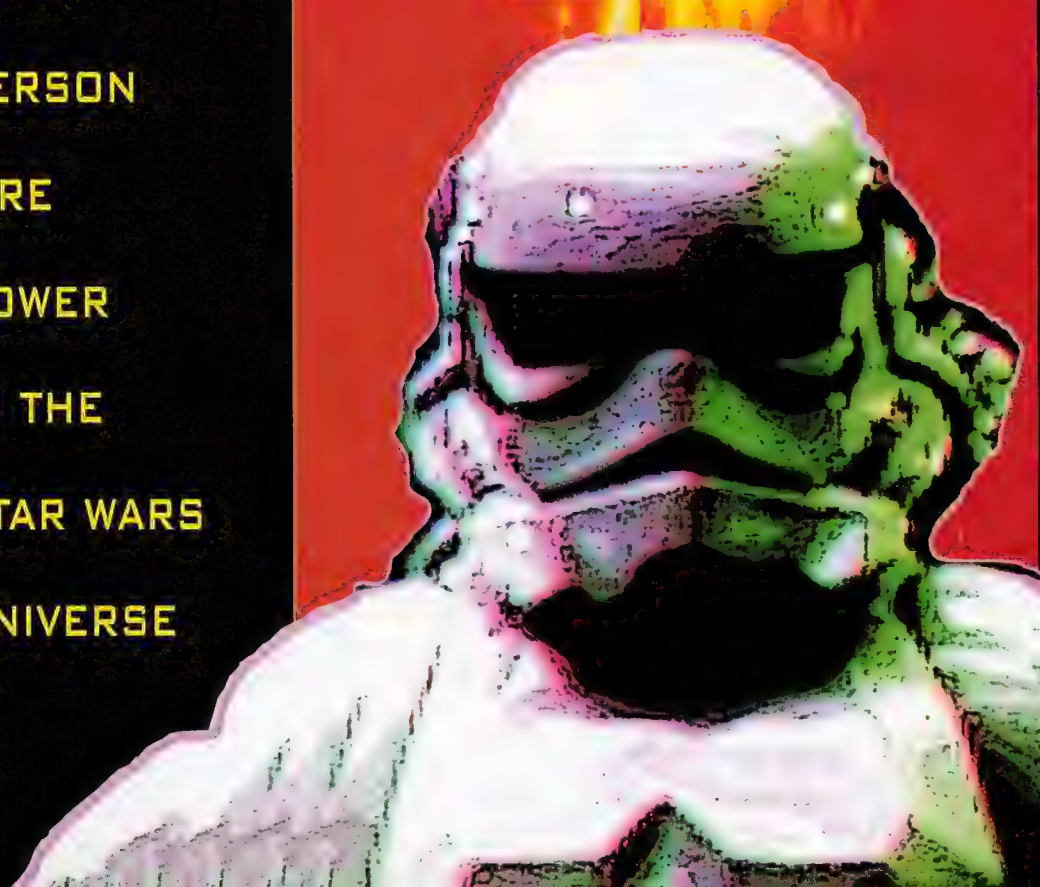

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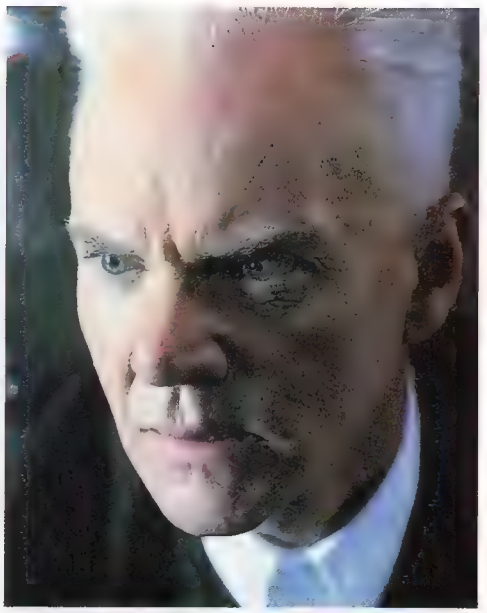
"We started out with
a basic idea - Australia,
the Outback, girl, tank,
kangaroos, beer, destruction
- and then it just kind of grew
from there..." Jamie Hewlett
Tank Girl's co-creator

Big guns, kangaroos and Spunk beer

Tank Girl: An insider's story

FROM ANARCHIC COMIC STRIP TO SPUNKY MAJOR-LEAGUE MOVIE HEROINE, TANK GIRL'S EVENTFUL JOURNEY TO THE BIG SCREEN HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT SMOOTH. GARRY MARSHALL, ASSISTANT EDITOR OF DEADLINE MAGAZINE, REMEMBERS IT ALL TOO WELL...

Captured by the Rippers, a gang of mutant kangaroos, in their underground bowling-alley HQ, Tank Girl and Jet Girl hatch an escape plan. Pervs should note: this is as much of Petty as you get to see in the whole film, so look for your thrills elsewhere.



Malcolm McDowell, as arch-villain Kesslee, looking like he just walked straight off the set of *Star Trek: Generations!*

The boys are back in town! T-Saint (Ice-T) and the rest of the Ripper gang show off their fake ears and nifty 'roo make-up.

"I snog for drugs" reads TG's decidedly non-PC T-shirt in this rare bedroom scene. Where *does* she do her shopping?

Tank and Jet meet the Rain Lady, a bonkers character who appears to be based (sort of) on Sub Girl from the comics.

Tank and Jet hold up the madam at the Liquid Silver club-cum-brothel. Plenty of top fashion tips in this shot.

Because water is a bit scarce in the world of *Tank Girl*, our heroine is forced to take showers under streams of sand.

Kesslee and his Department of Water and Power cronies show off to a captured Tank Girl, shortly before her escape.

You looking at me? Ice-T is scary enough at the best of times, even more so with those big ears and that cute nose.

Uh-oh! It looks like curtains for Tank Girl (Lori Petty) as the demented Kesslee (Malcolm McDowell) gains the upper hand during the climactic fight scene. (Of course, if you even begin to believe that, you really *haven't* seen enough movies...)

It's 4am on a cold, wet February morning. I've been sat in front of a Mac for 18 hours, in a tiny office above a recording studio in South London, generating final artwork for a $35 million MGM movie that's due out in less than two months. As I stare at the latest fax from the production company in LA asking why the disks haven't arrived yet, and wondering if our stressed out Power Mac has crashed (yet again), it occurs to me – more than once – that big Hollywood movies just shouldn't be made this way. But, of course, this is *Tank Girl.*

The unlikely history that led Hollywood to embrace Britain's coolest comic character began in 1988, with the creation of Britain's hippest comic, *Deadline. Deadline* was the brainchild of Steve Dillon and Brett Ewins, a couple of successful comic creators who'd become jaded with the conservative nature of the industry.

From the start, *Deadline* was committed to new talent. Brett had discovered Jamie Hewlett while lecturing at Worthing College of Art and, when *Deadline* was about to launch, asked him to come up with a new character. Jamie teamed up with Alan Martin, a friend from college who shared his taste for Scalextric, *Secret Squirrel* re-runs and all things *Star Wars*. Adding a liberal dose of alcohol and nicotine to cultural influences of this calibre, they could hardly go wrong.

Jamie: "*Tank Girl* was just a way of combating all of the crap characters that existed at the time. I wanted to come up with something spunkier. We started out with a basic idea – Australia, the Outback, girl, tank, kangaroos, beer, destruction – and it kind of grew from there... "

Alan: "The idea just kind of fell out of our heads really. We never conceived of the time period or the details. We only set it in Australia because Jamie didn't want to draw any buildings!"

Tank Girl's hot-rod tank, covered in lights, guns and "other stuff," in all its rugged glory.

"She's the visual equivalent of the Sex Pistols – you'd have to be blind not to find her sexy..."

Adam Ant, actor/musician

TANK GIRL WAS MASSIVE FROM DAY one. It seemed the world had been just waiting for a foul-mouthed, lager-swilling, suede-headed ultra-bitch to kick it in the nuts. Style magazines picked up on her quickly. *The Face* thought *Tank Girl* was "Fab," while *i-D* proclaimed *Deadline* "Britain's hippest comic." Fellow cultural icons fell over themselves to gush in admiration. Adam Ant explains his love for her: "She is the visual equivalent of the Sex Pistols. You'd have to be blind, deaf and dead not to think *Tank Girl* was sexy." Courtney Love, the driving force behind Hole, and then married to grunge king Kurt Cobain, was so impressed that when she discovered a film might be in the offing, she phoned the director and demanded to be in it.

Justine Frischmann from Elastica cited her as an inspiration for the band: "The first time I saw her, I thought she was great. She's not a prat. Most women who have strong ideas are prats. She's not a feminist – I think most women who call themselves feminists are missing the point. *Tank Girl* is too cool to be a feminist. She represents women in the '90s – she's dead sexy. She's very anti-PC, which is cool. If she was in a band, she would be in Elastica."

Two youths from Worthing had somehow come up with a character that was both a feminist icon and a sex object. But how long could they keep her underground?

A slew of offers to make a quick buck inevitably accompanied all this attention, but everyone at *Deadline* was keen to stay true to the character. She might be the fictitious progeny of drink and an unhealthy interest in bad '70s TV, but *Tank Girl* wasn't to be sold to the first dodgy geezer who crossed their palms with gold. In the end, though, they couldn't hold out, and she made it into a Wranglers ad.

"We tried our hardest to retain our integrity, you know – not sell out," Jamie explains. "For a long time we turned down as many things as possible, but then we realised that we weren't earning shit with the page rates on *Deadline,* so we just decided to sell out. We discovered we enjoyed the warm feel of executive buttock on thigh." From hereon in, there was no turning back. *Tank Girl* was heading for the big time.

ALREADY A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PRODUCER OF the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, Rachel Talalay had decided she wanted to direct. She relished the black humour and fun of the horror series, and liked the idea of working on the dream sequences and special effects. Her first work as a director was *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare.* It was at this point that *Tank Girl* crept up behind her and whopped her over the head with a baseball bat: "I received a copy of *Tank Girl* from Zoe, my stepdaughter, while I was in the middle of shooting *Freddy's Dead.* I had it on set and was reading it between takes. And I thought, 'Oh my God! I have to direct this!'" So she immediately called Tom Astor, *Deadline's* publisher.

"When Rachel contacted me," remembers Tom, "it all sounded really vague, but I had a number of other contacts in LA, so I went out there. I met three or four other people who had expressed interest and, through them, met with a number of agents. It was a good move – it meant that suddenly there were a lot of people in Hollywood talking about *Tank Girl.*

"When I met Rachel, I liked her. Although there were a lot of big names being bandied around, we eventually gave her the option to try and get the film made, because I could see this was *the* film she wanted to make and that she would fight tooth and nail to make it happen."

Pitching the movie with Rachel was the production company Trilogy, which had an impressive track record, including such films as *Backdraft* and *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.* Trilogy had always had a policy of developing its own material, cultivating writers, directors, actors and other members of the production team. It developed the character, and commissioned writer Tedi Sarafian to write a script. With the groundwork laid, *Tank Girl* set out in search of a studio.

With friends like these, Tanky was pretty soon being introduced to Hollywood's brightest and best. That said, she did have to be on her best behaviour. As Rachel knew, sassy heroines might be the moneyspinner of the moment, but pure *Tank Girl* was way beyond sassy. "I was scared that they wouldn't accept it, but all I could do was put together a game plan of how to approach them," explains Rachel. "In selling a movie, so much of it has to do with passion. So I came up with this *'Nikita* meets *Mad Max'* pitch, which is far from the movie that I finally ended up making – but it was the simplest way I could give studio executives something they'd understand."

Spielberg's studio Amblin passed on the project, rumours suggesting that it had found *Tank Girl* "too hip." Disney too shied away. In the end, MGM stepped in with an offer – although, Rachel admits, it too had reservations. But that was hardly surprising – in the PC/Family Values atmosphere currently pervading Hollywood, drinking, smoking, drugs and bestiality aren't your typical lifestyle choices to be presented in a major movie.

"MGM had second thoughts right up until the day we released – and maybe after too," said Rachel. "It was excited and it was nervous. If we'd spent ten million dollars less on the film, it might have been 50% less scared, but, sure, it was scared. There was no big star to hang its

Behind the scenes on the *Tank Girl* set, as Petty and Anglo-Australian actress Naomi Watts (Jet Girl) await their cue. "Jet learns from Tank Girl," says Watts, who changes from a quiet mousy thing to all-action heroine during the course of the film.

Donner (Scott Coffey) can't believe his luck as Naomi Watts decides his lap looks a comfy place to rest between shots.

General larking out on set, with a bunch of Rippers daring each other to drive down to the local diner, make-up intact.

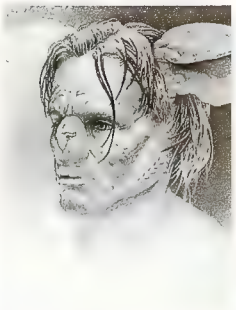
Director Rachel Talalay had to fight to get the film made.

It might be fun being a mutant kangaroo: it certainly looks that way in the film. What's not fun is putting on the mask...

...as actor Doug Jones makes abundantly clear!

Mark "Crash" McCreery drew the original designs...

...the problem being to capture the flavour of the comic characters, while still allowing the actors to do their stuff.



Each Ripper has his own look. This one's Booga.

Shane Mahan and Alan Scott at the Stan Winston Studio co-ordinated turning Crash's drawings into finished 'roos.

Heads or Tails?

Bringing the Rippers, *Tank Girl's* mutant renegade kangaroo co-stars, to life wasn't an easy task. But then neither was having to dress up as one...

Lots of the best bits in *Tank Girl* feature the Rippers, TG's mutant kangaroo buddies. It's very clever make-up – involved enough to make the actors inside look genuinely strange and 'roo-like, yet light enough to allow them to do their job. Despite all the latex, Ice-T is immediately recognisable, for instance.

Alan Scott, from the Stan Winston Studio, was the guy given the job of making the Rippers' ears and tails come alive. "All the actors had fully articulated ears," he explains. "The snouts were operated by servo motors. But because this was prosthetic make-up and glued directly to the actor's face, it was always going to be difficult."

To enhance the effect, a mechanism was devised which linked the movement of the actors' lips to the movement of the snout. Sometimes, however, the actors had to put up with being little more than puppets. "The motors were on remote, so if we wanted the Ripper to snarl, or to speak, all we had to do was hit a switch," laughs Alan. "Then we had the tails. We sculpted these for all the Rippers, and had a whole crew of mould-makers who'd break down the sculpture into eight or nine pieces. All the Rippers had articulated tails – made of honeycomb aluminium and light graphite – which were disposable. They had to be light, because the actors would be wearing them for eight hours at a time, and they had to be durable for the action. We also had light stunt tails made of polyfoam. In all, there were eight principal and 16 stunt tails. We also had one fully operational articulated tail which could be used for inserts and other shots."

To get the stunningly life-like effect, however, wasn't without its difficulties. "In the early make-up tests the actors had problems with the servo-motors on their heads," Alan explains. "So we took the servo-pack, shifted it down onto their body and ran cables from the skull-cap down to the servos. We then created a prosthetic hump to cover the motors. It actually worked out well in the end, because it really helped with the look. Before, you had this huge head and a huge tail, but now the hump created a gradual curve which linked the head and tail and made the characters appear more realistic."

And it works too. Indeed, watching the movie you'd never know these weren't *real* mutant kangaroos doing their stuff...

DeeTee is a cool, jazz-influenced Ripper, played by actor Reg E Cathey. Here, sculptor Bruce Fuller builds up the look of the character over a cast of Cathey's head. Shame about the fag!

hat on. Then it discovered it was getting so much early press coverage, and so much interest from hip places and people. There was a lot of excitement from the younger people in the Studio.

"There was a lot of talk about the violence and a little bit of talk about the drugs, but she doesn't shoot up – she smokes dope in a scene. The problem was always going to be her relationship with Booga *(Tank Girl's* kangaroo boyfriend). I think if we'd put bestiality into the first draft they would have looked at me and said: 'What? Are you crazy?' so I snuck it in the second or third draft of the script and by then, people had accepted Booga as a character and it seemed to make sense for him and *Tank Girl* to get it together. It wasn't an issue any more."

"No-one questioned how I was going to handle the comedy. I don't think we knew how much this was going to be a screwball comedy. Deep down, I knew it, but what I was selling was the fact that I could do action and I could do special effects on a budget... As time went on, it got more screwball and more wacky every day – then the studio were *really* worried."

Ice-T, in full Ripper make-up, and Lori Petty cuddle up on set. All nice girls love a kangaroo.

IN WHAT MUST BE A RARE MOVE, THE STUDIO KEPT *Deadline* closely involved with the project. "Rachel was determined to keep strong links with *Deadline* throughout the production," explains Tom Astor. "Although we had no experience in film-making, she recognised that it was the freshness of *Tank Girl* which was exciting, and felt that she needed a fresh perspective which she felt she might not get from Hollywood people. MGM even asked Tom, Jamie and Alan to supply a cast "wish list." They had no ideas when it came to *Tank Girl,* so they went for the baddie instead. It was nothing if not ambitious:

"Do we want Nicholson?"

"Nah, he's past it."

"What about De Niro?"

"Or Gary Oldman? Or Harvey Keitel?"

"I know: Malcolm McDowell!"

They put down Malcolm McDowell, never expecting for a minute that MGM would even approach him. Rachel Talalay agreed: "I absolutely adore Malcolm. I'm a huge fan of *A Clockwork Orange.* It's definitely a strong influence in this film, so it was thrilling to work with him. His character, Kesslee, is a very sophisticated bad guy, absolutely effete, nothing ruffles him, and Malcolm is just viciously evil doing that. There's great delight in every moment, and he knows how to bring those little twitches of evil. He was just wonderful to work with."

"Lori Petty is the greatest: a woman with energy and humour – that's *Tank Girl*"

Rachel Talalay, director

But the perfect *Tank Girl* still had to be found. There's nothing the *Deadline* staff like more than a *Tank Girl* lookalike competition, and as a shameless publicity stunt, open castings were held in London and LA. For Jamie, the casting in London was an ordeal. "This was the worst day of my life," he moans. "We kept trying to leave but every exit was covered by Tank Girls. It was hideous. There was no way out. I was longing for a huge beard and a fake sombrero. I would have been out of there within the first ten minutes."

There was, of course, zero chance of a young hopeful being plucked from obscurity, so, after a false start with the allegedly fractious Emily Lloyd, Lori Petty, star of *Point Break,* finally won out. Rachel was happy with the choice: "Lori Petty is the greatest. I mean, there's a woman with incredible energy, life, humour, and that's what *Tank Girl* is all about. The way I imagined *Tank Girl* was, well, when I was a kid and I was in the principal's office for all these things I'd fucked up, I was always in tears instead of saying 'Fuck you! You don't know what you're talking about!' *Tank Girl* was the girl who only told them were to get off and found the funniest way to do it. She thought up the lines you always thought up on the bus when you were going home."

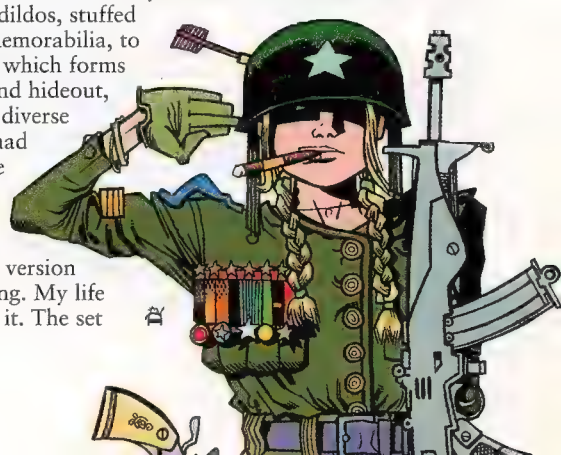
BUT IT WAS WHEN IT CAME TO TRANSFERRING Jamie's vision to the screen that things started to get tricky. For a start, neither Jamie or Alan had ever been introduced to the more delicate arts of storytelling, like characterisation or plot development. If their stories had any sense to them, it was the kind you can only see through the bottom of your tenth pint of scrumpy. The thought of trying to drag *Tank Girl* into a real story was a bit frightening. Surely the magic would be gone? To everyone's relief, the movie plot made *Scooby Doo* look like *The Big Sleep,* and was all the better for it. In brief, a future apocalypse has dried up all the water on the earth's surface, so that those who control the wells, control the world. In America, the Department of Water and Power, or DWP, rules with an iron hand. *Tank Girl* crosses it, but manages to charm its despotic leader, Kesslee, with her "spunk." He tries to break her, fails, and after much running around, she returns with the feared Rippers, a band of kangaroo freedom fighters, and, of course, her Tank.

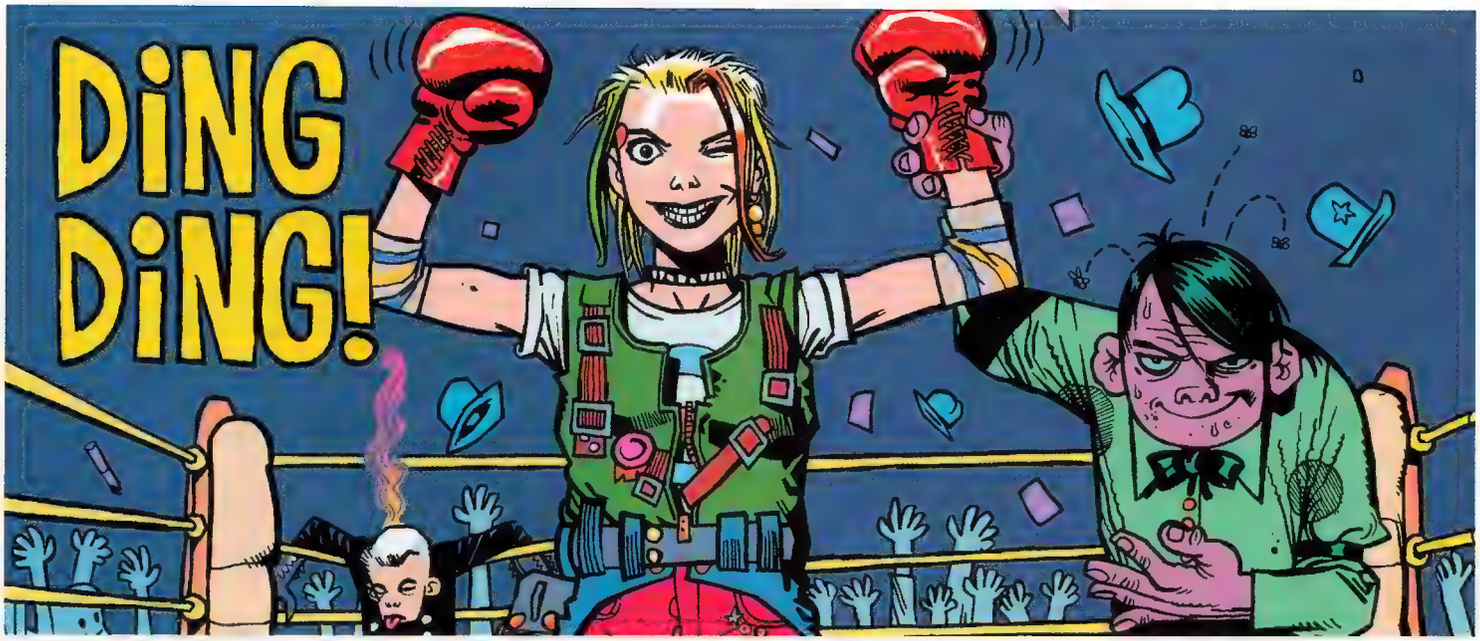
Okay, so the spirit of the comic was safe, but what about the look?

Rachel was determined to be true to Jamie's work: "It was an incredible challenge to get that kind of comic detail into the movie. We had to create a whole world – Jamie's art is extremely textured, with hundreds of layers, so that you'll look in the corner of one panel and there'll be 25 little jokes in a one-inch area. I wanted to keep that, to create a whole new future world: the tank, the weapons, the jet – create everything from scratch. It was going to be very difficult to bring it to the screen, but I just had to. I mean, we're all kids. We all wanna design all that cool stuff."

Production designer Catherine Hardwicke would be entirely responsible for the look of the film. With a relatively modest budget she had to create the base for the Department of Water and Power, and add a desolate, barren landscape of desert and destruction which could also double as *Tank Girl's* home. "I had to find a location where we could re-use and rehabilitate buildings – we had to work from an existing location because it was a huge concept, visually. It was going to be an enormous challenge to do this movie on the budget. I had done two other movies in Tucson, so I knew about the Titan Missile Asylum nearby, and brought pictures of it to my interview. We immediately went out to visit and found a great open pit mine – and then there were some little tin shacks. I opened the door of one shack and found the place which subsequently became our back lot. I knew that we could use a lot of existing spaces and add to them, and thought this could be our stage, so I did sketches of how I thought we could use the space to create the DWP."

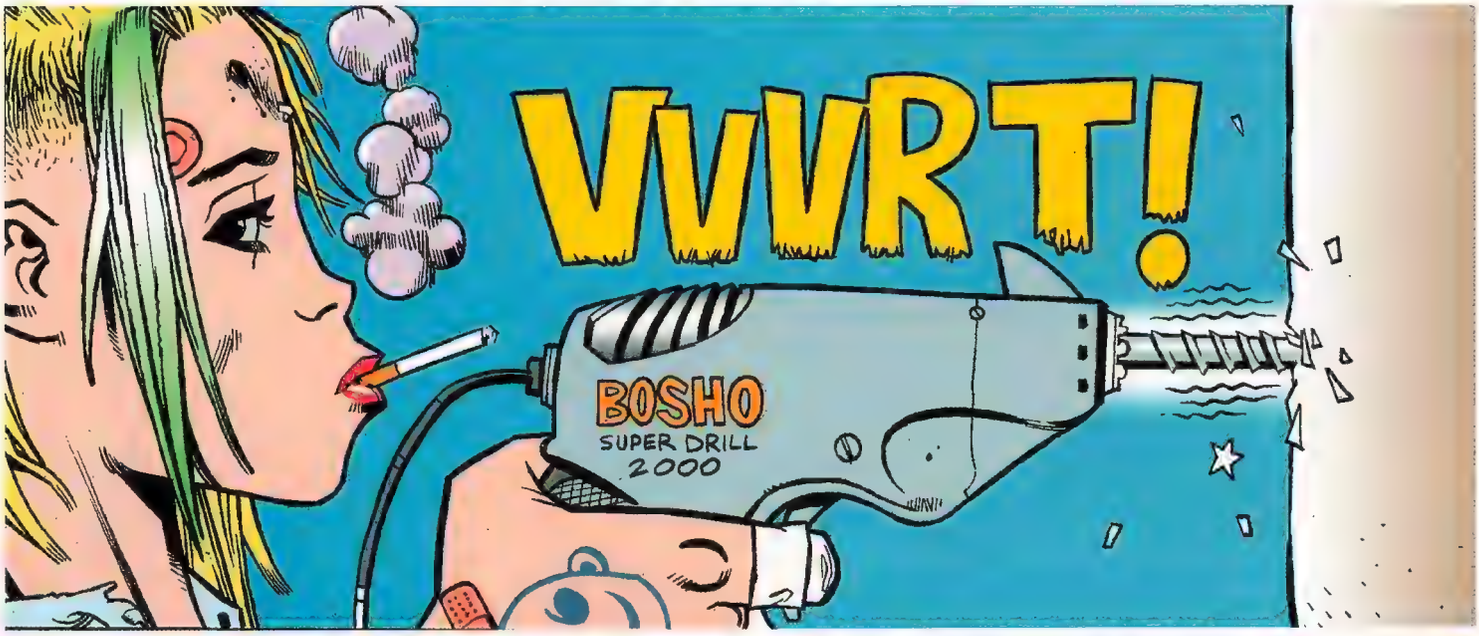
Of course, it wasn't all *Mad Max* designer desolation. Room also had to be made for the '70s tat-and-toys look of the comic. From *Tank Girl's* bedroom, full of dildos, stuffed toys and rock 'n' roll memorabilia, to the cool Bowling Alley, which forms the Rippers' underground hideout, there was an unusually diverse set of looks Catherine had to create. "We have one set, Liquid Silver," she explains, "which is absolutely decadent. It's like a Salvador Dali version of a brothel or something. My life gave me inspiration for it. The set





To link the movie as closely to the comic books as possible, *Tank Girl* co-creator Jamie Hewlett was asked to produce a series of still illustrations for the film itself. These were usually used to facilitate switching from one scene to the next. Here, in a very cartoony image, Tank Girl knocks out Kesslee during one of their many fights. All's well with the world once again.

Booga (at least, we *think* it's Booga), Tank Girl, DeeTee, Ice-T and Jet Girl plan their raid on Kesslee's base in another Hewlett illustration. This leads into a large fight scene, where the genetically engineered 'roos prove just what they're made of, jumping 40 feet in the air to rip the throats out of Kesslee's men. Pretty it's not. Funny, however, it most definitely is.



Yes, you guessed it – we liked these Hewlett drawings so much, we wanted to print loads of them. In this shot, TG tries to escape from Kesslee's prison camp or starts to fix up her tank (or some such thing). The only real problem with these images as they're used in the film is that they really emphasise just how different Petty looks from the comic book original.

was created in Phoenix in an abandoned shopping mall that never got off the ground. We were only allowed in there about three weeks in advance, so we pre-built a lot of things and then shipped them in. The whole mall is supposed to be buried under white sand. You walk down into the parking garage and you're in this world filled with all these poor people grilling rat burgers on their car engines, and then you enter into the fabulous Liquid Silver Sex Palace. There's plenty of water to drink and bathe in, and there are beautiful girls dressed in white. Almost everywhere else in the movie, everyone's dirty and grungy."

While not a particularly special effects-heavy movie, *Tank Girl* is outstanding in one particular area. Rachel was concerned from the outset about the difficulties she'd face in bringing the kangaroos, Jamie's demented outback mutants, to the screen. It was going to take the best, and that meant one man: Stan Winston.

"It was scary," admits Rachel, "having to make the Rippers real, but that's the genius of Stan Winston. And I have a confession to make. When we started out, I was deeply cynical about Stan Winston. We sent the script to all the major make-up and effects people. I knew Stan was the master, but I thought, 'He's done all these cool films, and has hundreds of Oscars. He could do any film he wants to. And, anyway, we can't afford him and he'll need three times as much time.'" As it turned out, Stan Winston fell in love with the marsupial marauders instantly, and did everything he could to get involved with the project. His team's expertise proved itself in the creation of the eight Rippers: not only do they work visually – perfectly capturing the bestiality that terrorises the DWP's men – they work technically too, providing the actors with an unparalleled level of creative expression.

The shooting schedule was punishing. The cast and crew spent 16 weeks in the baking hell of Arizona, at the height of summer. Everyone suffered, but none more so than the Rippers. Ice-T, who plays T-Saint, has some ugly memories:

"Me and the other Rippers really bonded. It's like being in a plane crash, it's like whenever you come close to death with a group of people, you bond. It was the most dreadful situation I've ever been in my life. It's three hours a day to get it [the make-up] on and an hour to get it off – that's like flying to New York and having somebody put glue on your face the whole time. You can't get up and you can't even go to the bathroom. You just get glue stuck on your face. At 110° in Arizona. And a rubber suit. I think I suffered brain damage out there."

"It was the most dreadful situation I've ever been in my life. It's three hours a day to get it [the make-up] on..."

Ice-T, actor/musician

Notice the nifty McDowell reference? Petty dresses up as *A Clockwork Orange* droog.

Probably the only people to get a kick out of the shoot were Jamie and Alan. "Going over there was great – it was the crowning experience of my life," says Jamie, who has a tendency to exaggerate. "The most amazing thing about being on set was seeing how much expensive equipment had been dragged thousands of miles out into the desert because of me – trucks and stadium lights and millions of guys with walkie-talkies and headsets all going 'Hi, there, Jamie!' Rachel is a diamond geezer – in the rough.

"I went to see Ice-T. He was in a small oxygen tent with eight kangaroos. At the time I didn't think I could cope with the idea of just walking in there and saying, 'Hi there! I created you and it's my fault you're all stuck here in ten tons of latex in the middle of the desert.' When Alan first met the kangaroos, he'd just stepped off the plane. I was already on set and I managed to get Booga and Donner to come over and chat to Alan in full Kangaroo robe – this ordinary chat about the weather and who was wearing the most make-up. Alan was really freaked by it."

But back in the real world there was still a film to be made. To deal with the whole ordeal, Rachel let the spirit of the venture guide her through the worst of it: "I had to drink a lot of beer to get the feel of *Tank Girl*. Spunk beer, every time, every day. *Tank Girl's* personal favourite brand. The whole shoot was a nightmare – I had huge stunts, huge effects and really challenging actors to work with. I also had eight actors in humongous make-up, and had to make sure I didn't lose sight of all the technical difficulties while also getting this incredible visual sense and all the fun.

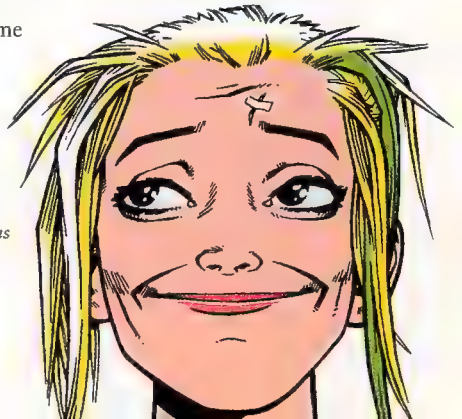
"Lori was the greatest, though. I mean, she's crazy. She's right out there on the edge. She'll say anything. She'll do anything. This was too big a part for somebody who wasn't a thousand times committed. Lori will tell you she almost died doing this. *I* almost died doing this. It was so physically gruelling. We were constantly asking her do things she wasn't comfortable with. We'd say, 'Okay, now you're going to go out onto the tank barrel and lie on it with the tank moving and we're going to try to get you as close to the truck as possible so you can swing over.' And the look on her face said: 'I don't think so!' Half an hour later, she's doing it. You should see her bruises! She'd be happy to show you all 500 of them. And she's funny. *Tank Girl*, to me, is as much comedy as action, and getting just the fun of her being crazy."

The shooting might have finished, the effects now in order and ready to go, but Rachel was still a long way from having a finished film. The decision to pitch *Tank Girl* as an action/adventure and then approach it as a comedy had resulted in a rather odd hybrid. Was it taking itself too seriously, or just taking the piss? A crisis was brewing. Once again, Jamie was called to LA, along with Frank Wynne, editor of *Deadline*, to brainstorm ideas on what to do next. They suggested that the movie should be closer to the comic, Jamie being particularly keen that more of his work should feature in the film in some way. Not expecting that their suggestions would be taken on board, they returned to London.

A week later, MGM asked us to go ahead with all their ideas. Suddenly, we were providing post-production from our broom-cupboard/office. The plan was to drop drawings by Jamie into the movie, highlighting certain scenes and hopefully setting the tone more clearly (it was also a cheap way of providing continuity). In the fine tradition of *Deadline*, the work was barely done on time, and with completely inadequate tools. In the end, somehow, it all came together, and the movie was set for its final cut.

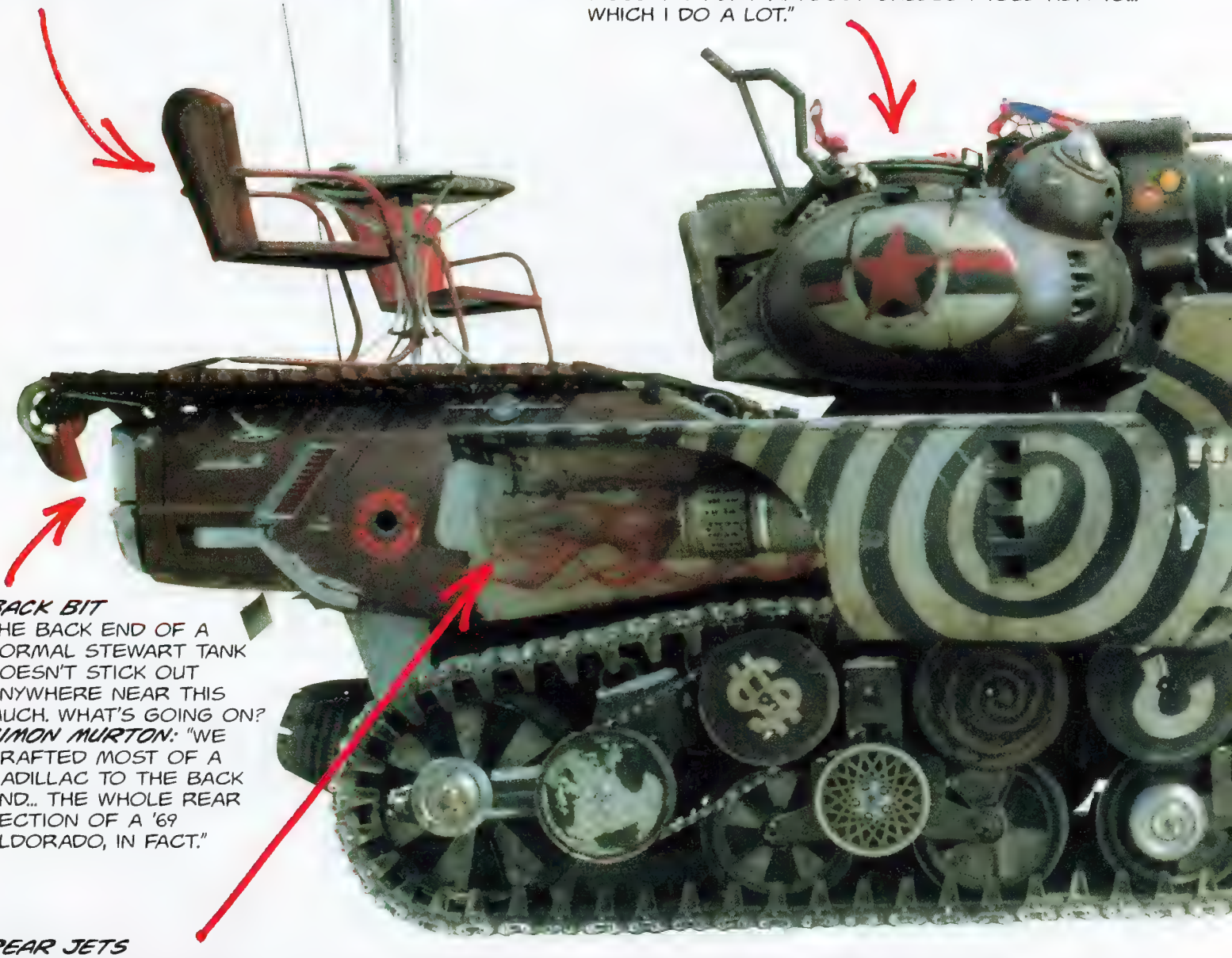
It was always the hope of everyone involved that *Tank Girl* should strike a balance between the commercial needs of a major blockbuster and the underground spirit of the comic character. Did we succeed? Malcolm McDowell's comment, made during the shoot, will hopefully prove close to the mark: "It's not the kind of film you'd expect to see normally, which I think is why John Calley at United Artists was brave to give them the green light. It'll be a real hip kind of movie, and I hate to make these predictions [but] years ago I made a movie called *A Clockwork Orange*, and it became a sort of cult film. This has the same flavour to it..."

Garry Marshall is assistant editor of Deadline *magazine. Interviews and extracts from* The Making of Tank Girl *(See book reviews – page 82) used with the kind permission of the author, Frank Wynne.* Tank Girl © *Deadline Publications Ltd.* Tank Girl The Movie © *1995 UIP/MGM. Full review on page 66.*



PATIO THING
TANK GIRL DOESN'T JUST LIKE GOING FAST AND SHOOTING THINGS, SHE ALSO ENJOYS HANGING OUT WITH HER MATES. HENCE THIS NIFTY PATIO AFFAIR ON THE REAR DECK...
SIMON MURTON:
"HERE WE'VE GOT A BARBECUE FOR SUNDAY OUTINGS, A LAWN CHAIR AND AN EASY CHAIR. THE SAME PROPANE THAT RUNS THE JETS ALSO MAKES THE BARBECUE WORK."

INSIDE THE HATCH
MOST TANKS ARE HORRIBLE INSIDE... ALL CRAMPED AND FULL OF HARD EDGES JUST WAITING FOR YOU TO BUMP YOUR HEAD. THEY ALSO TEND TO RUN ON DIESEL. BUT NOT TANK GIRL'S...
LORI PETTY: "THE TANK CAN RUN ON BEER ALONE. IT'S JUST SELF-SUFFICIENT AS LONG AS YOU CAN POUR BEER INTO IT. I HAD THEM PUT A BEDROOM IN THERE. I'VE GOT A JACUZZI. I CAN FIT MY BOYFRIEND IN THERE TOO. GOT A LITTLE REFRIGERATOR FULL OF BEERS. GOT ALL KINDS OF STUFF. OH, AND IT LISTENS TO MY EVERY COMMAND. IT SPEAKS FLUENT ENGLISH, FRENCH, ITALIAN, AND IT RESPONDS TO WHISTLES. AND HAND SIGNALS. IT'S REALLY A PUPPY. I MEAN, SHE WOULDN'T HURT ANYBODY UNLESS I TOLD HER TO... WHICH I DO A LOT."



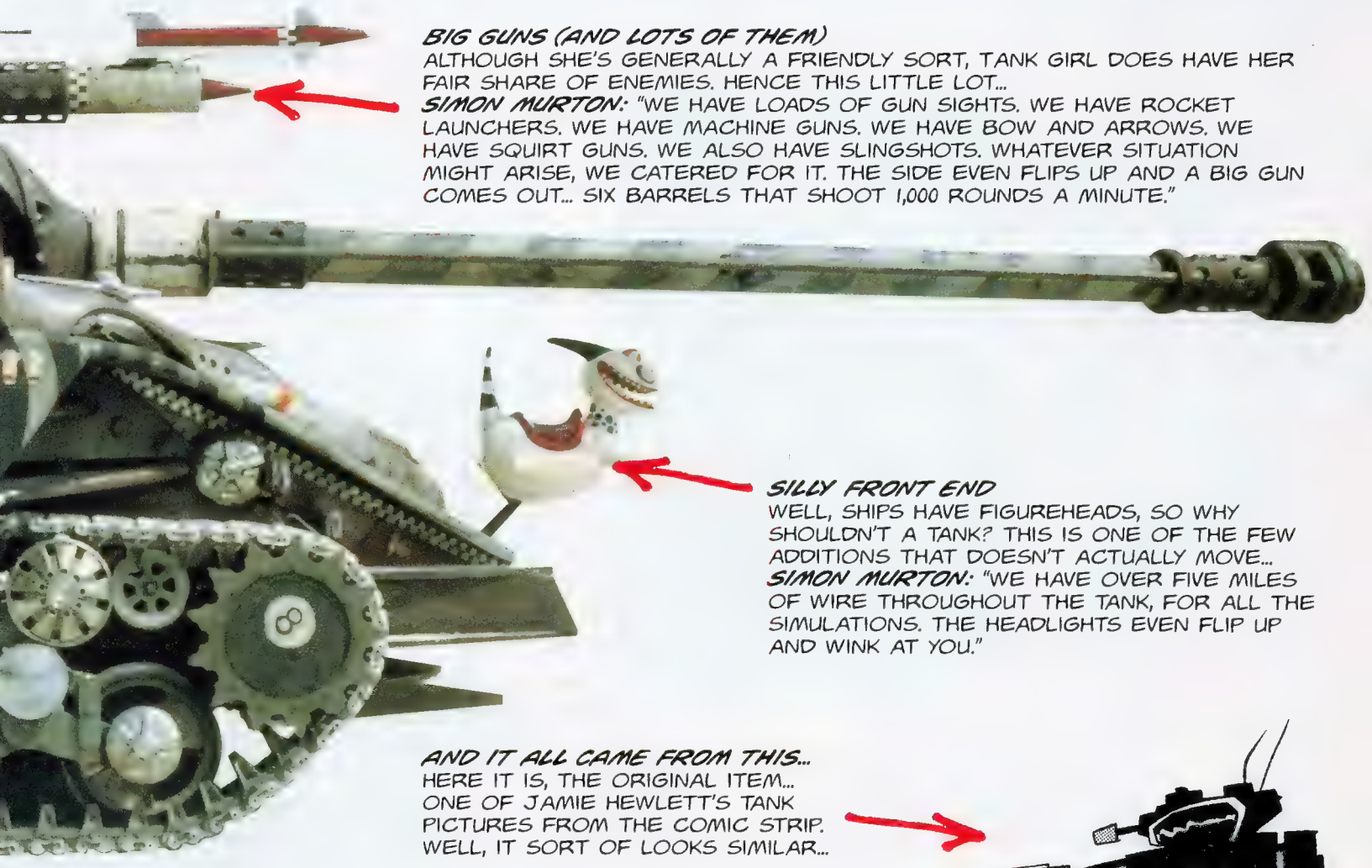
BACK BIT
THE BACK END OF A NORMAL STEWART TANK DOESN'T STICK OUT ANYWHERE NEAR THIS MUCH. WHAT'S GOING ON?
SIMON MURTON: "WE GRAFTED MOST OF A CADILLAC TO THE BACK END... THE WHOLE REAR SECTION OF A '69 ELDORADO, IN FACT."

REAR JETS
SOMEWHERE UNDERNEATH ALL THIS FANCY KIT THERE'S A REAL WORLD WAR II TANK, BURSTING TO BREAK FREE.. ***SIMON MURTON:*** "WE STARTED OUT WITH AN MSAI STEWART, A LIGHT TANK WITH TWIN CADILLAC MOTORS AND A TOP SPEED OF 37 MILES AN HOUR. IN THE MOVIE, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO GO AT LEAST 90 TO A 100 MILES AN HOUR... SO WE PUT JET THRUSTERS AT THE BACK. WE ALSO MOUNTED PROPANE TANKS FOR THE ENGINES ON THE SIDE, TO SHOOT FLAMES LIKE A JET."

Tank Girl's Tank: a girl's best friend

WHERE WOULD TANK GIRL BE WITHOUT HER EQUALLY FAMOUS SIDEKICK TANK? EXACTLY...

Naturally, not just *any* set of wheels will do for Tank Girl. Art director Simon Murton found himself in charge of taking Jamie Hewlett's wild sketches, and creating from them a mechanical co-star for Lori Petty's Tank Girl that looked the part – and yet wasn't too much of a health hazard...



BIG GUNS (AND LOTS OF THEM)
ALTHOUGH SHE'S GENERALLY A FRIENDLY SORT, TANK GIRL DOES HAVE HER FAIR SHARE OF ENEMIES. HENCE THIS LITTLE LOT...
SIMON MURTON: "WE HAVE LOADS OF GUN SIGHTS. WE HAVE ROCKET LAUNCHERS. WE HAVE MACHINE GUNS. WE HAVE BOW AND ARROWS. WE HAVE SQUIRT GUNS. WE ALSO HAVE SLINGSHOTS. WHATEVER SITUATION MIGHT ARISE, WE CATERED FOR IT. THE SIDE EVEN FLIPS UP AND A BIG GUN COMES OUT... SIX BARRELS THAT SHOOT 1,000 ROUNDS A MINUTE."

SILLY FRONT END
WELL, SHIPS HAVE FIGUREHEADS, SO WHY SHOULDN'T A TANK? THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW ADDITIONS THAT DOESN'T ACTUALLY MOVE...
SIMON MURTON: "WE HAVE OVER FIVE MILES OF WIRE THROUGHOUT THE TANK, FOR ALL THE SIMULATIONS. THE HEADLIGHTS EVEN FLIP UP AND WINK AT YOU."

AND IT ALL CAME FROM THIS...
HERE IT IS, THE ORIGINAL ITEM... ONE OF JAMIE HEWLETT'S TANK PICTURES FROM THE COMIC STRIP. WELL, IT SORT OF LOOKS SIMILAR...

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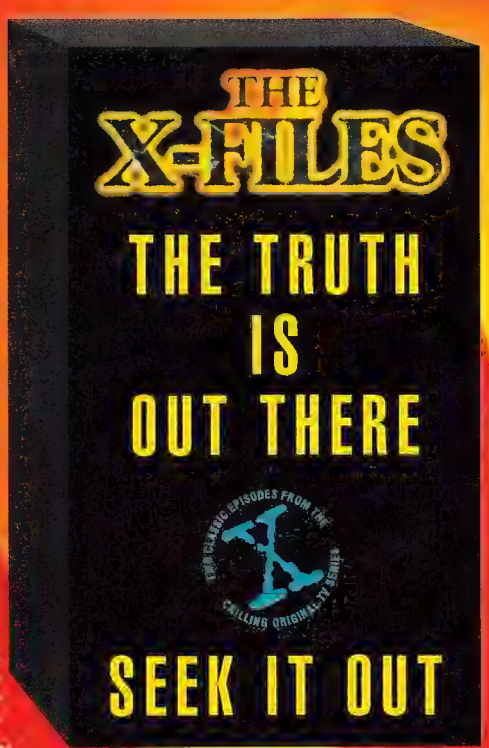

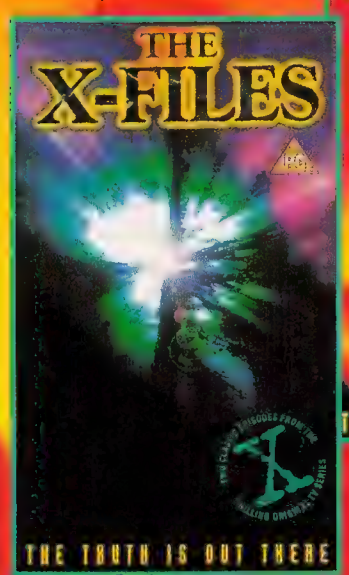

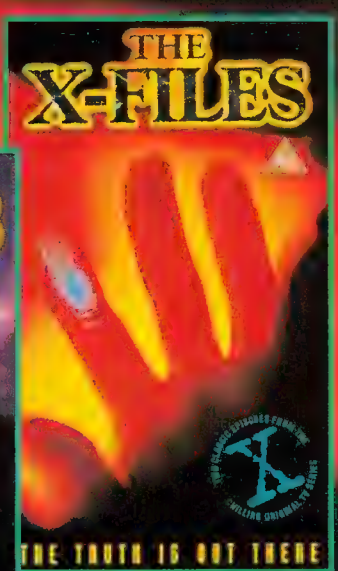

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Neutral Zone

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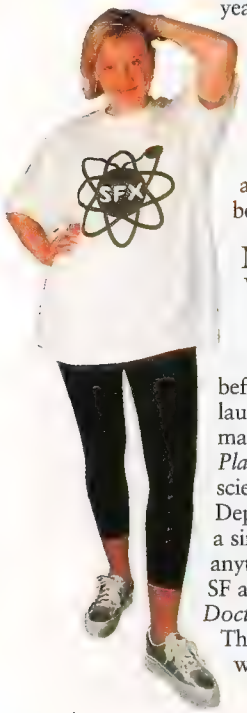
So why SFX? And why now?

This is, of course, the letters page. Unfortunately, it's also issue one of SFX. There's just one problem with that little combo – yes (you guessed it), no letters. That being the case, I thought I'd take this opportunity to tell you about the magazine and the people behind it.

First off: the mag. The idea behind SFX has been burning away on the backboiler for more years than I care to remember now. Both deputy editor Dave Golder and myself have done proposals for it (or something very much like it) in the past, had them rejected, waited a few more years, then suggested them again. This year the planets must have been in alignment or something – that, or this Summer's bumper crop of SF films finally swung the decision our way – because, at long last, the proposals have been accepted and the mag has become a reality.



NOW THE PEOPLE. Well, there's me, the editor – Matt Bielby. Last year, I launched a little Internet magazine called *.net*, and before that I was behind the launches of computer game mags like *Amiga Power*, *Super Play* and *PC Gamer*. However, science fiction is my first love. Deputy editor Dave Golder has a similar background and, if anything, is an even more ardent SF admirer. (He's a bit of a *Doctor Who* man is our Dave.) Then there's Simo, our staff writer, who knows more about *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* than anyone else alive (including Douglas Adams). You'll probably notice some familiar names among our other writers too, gathered from both the computer games mags and fantasy/sci-fi/horror fanzine arenas. Oh, and art editor Matt Williams is, as you can probably tell, a bit of a genius. Only the best for SFX.

NOW THE LETTERS. Every magazine needs feedback from its readers, and SFX is no exception. Starting next issue, we'll be printing a selection of your comments on the current state of SF, here, in the Neutral Zone.

We want to hear your opinions on science fiction/fantasy movies, TV, books and comics (or any other medium you like). We want to hear your grand theories on the whole sweeping universe of science fiction. We want to hear about any tiny, specific thing that's niggling you. And, yes, we even want to hear about what you think of SFX. As you can see from the top of the page, there's a nifty SFX T-shirt for the best letter we print. (And, predictably enough, Poppy, on the left, isn't included.)

There are also a couple of regular featurettes that we'll be running here every month. The first of these is SFXcellent! (see right), which enables you to wibble on about your favourite bit of sci-fi. The second is called "Doing It My Way..." and gives you the chance to recreate a scene from a classic sci-fi film, TV series or comic. Just take a photograph of yourself and/or a group of friends recreating the scene using whatever props or costumes come to hand, and send it in to us at the address above. We'll print the best one each month, and once again the person reponsible will earn themselves a free SFX T-shirt. We're looking for original ideas which make us laugh, so lack of budget won't be a hindrance here – in fact, it could actually be an advantage!

Matt Bielby, editor

SFXCELLENT! Best Bit of Science Fiction Ever

The idea behind this little regular slot is beautifully simple. You write in saying what you reckon the Best Bit of Science Fiction Ever is and why (under 200 words, please), and we print it.

To get you going, here's top fanzine writer Suzi 9mm's own nomination:

Star Wars

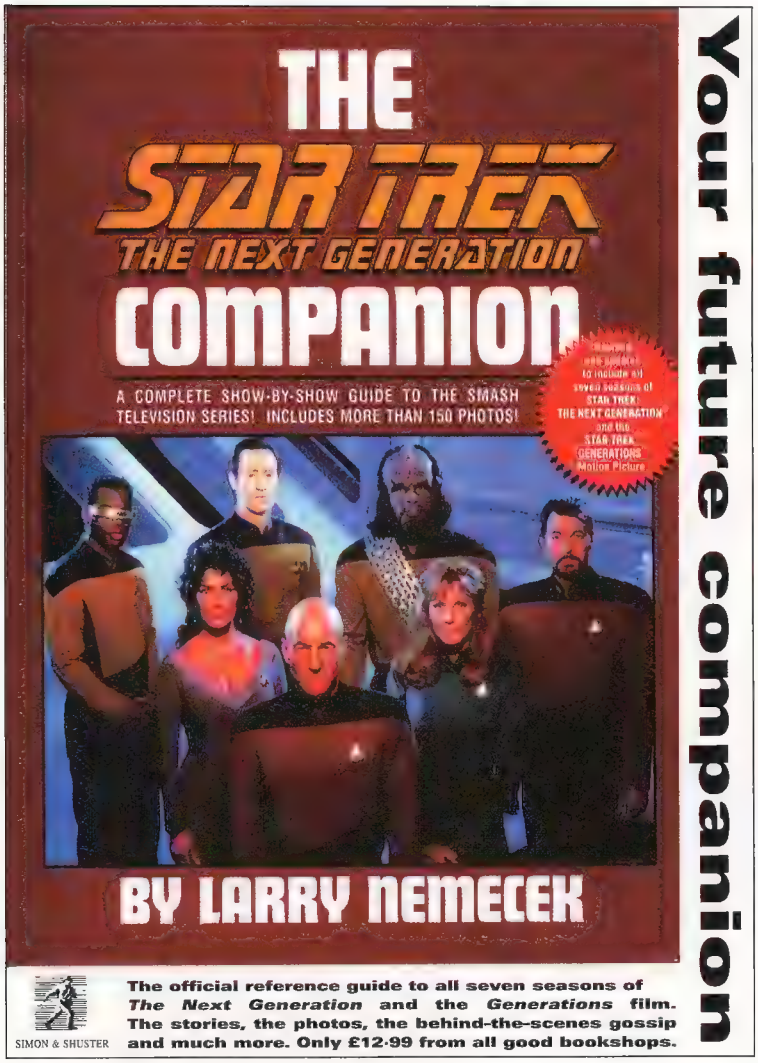
"It is a legally enforcable opinion that *Star Wars* is the coolest film in the universe... There's that opening shot of the giant spaceship; the incredible mixture of aliens in the Mos Eisley Cantina; the desperate scramble in the garbage crusher; Luke and Leia swinging across that vast chasm; and, of course, the brilliant final attack on the Death Star, with Han and Chewie showing up just in time to help Luke.

"The exciting action is complemented by the memorable characters and the ultra-quotable dialogue: 'Aren't you a little short for a stormtrooper?', 'These aren't the droids you're looking for', 'I got one! I got one!'-'Don't get cocky, kid!' One of my personal favourite scenes is the sequence in which our heroes make their escape from the Death Star. Obi-Wan

Harrison Ford as Han Solo in George Lucas' classic *Star Wars* – this guy's sex on legs, apparently...

Kenobi has been struck down by Darth Vader (bool hiss!), which just gives the others enough time to make it to the Millennium Falcon. They pile in, amid a hail of laserfire from the surrounding Imperial Stormtroopers, and last up the ramp is – swoon! – Harrison Ford.

"In 1977 he was at his leanest and hunkiest, and that blaster strapped to his thigh was so suggestive... This sequence, like the rest of the film, is exciting, tense, loud and sexy. It's pure cinema, and quite possibly the Best Bit of Science Fiction Ever."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ISSUE 7
OUT END OF JUNE

David Langford

The Book on the Edge of Forever

What's the most famous sci-fi title of all time? Everyone has an opinion: *The Time Machine*, the *Foundation* trilogy, *2001*, *Frankenstein* (if you reckon that's SF rather than horror)... And then there's always some clever sod who argues for the Conservative manifesto or the Bible.

But how about the most famous unpublished SF work? The chorus from insiders is unanimous: there's nothing to challenge the supremacy of that non-existent blockbuster anthology *The Last Dangerous Visions*, edited by Harlan Ellison.

It's a modern legend. Like the Flying Dutchman, this ghostly volume has sailed down the decades with dead men in its crew, its grisly fame increasing as the years roll by. Will it ever reach a safe haven? Of course, cries Captain Ellison. Never, suspects early contributor Charles Platt (who in 1994 celebrated the silver jubilee of his story sale to Ellison after waiting 25 years to see it published – and, yes, he's still waiting...)

The tale opens with Ellison's taboo-breaking SF anthology *Dangerous Visions*, which appeared in 1967, was widely acclaimed, and gathered many awards for contributors. Hot with excitement, Ellison assembled a much bigger (and, carping critics complained, flabbier) follow-up: *Again, Dangerous Visions* in 1972.

His third volume was going to be huger still. *The Last Dangerous Visions* began with stories which, like Platt's 1969 submission, were squeezed from *ADV* – and grew in the editor's imagination to become a definitive map of contemporary SF, featuring every significant writer who hadn't been in books one or two. As it grew, it slithered out of control. *TLDV* was to be published six months after ADV in 1972. The first of Ellison's many announcements came in September 1973, with the footnote "AND I DAMMIT TO HELL DON'T WANT TO SEE SUBMISSIONS FROM ANYONE EVER AGAIN IN THIS LIFE!" (Even then there were 60,000 words of story introductions for him left to write.) By 1974 he was hunting again for different stories now new SF writers were beginning to emerge. *TLDV* would be a million – maybe a million-and-a-half – words long!

Time passed. Interviewed in 1976, Ellison stated proudly that *TLDV* would appear in Spring 1977. Next year he assured contributors that it was on course for Christmas 1978. A 1978 letter promised that the book would appear from a different publisher by Christmas 1979. This slipped again to 1980...

I was at the 1980 World SF Convention in Boston when Ellison received a standing ovation for his announcement that the anthology, so long delayed, had now been personally delivered! General enthusiasm and relief were so infectious that wild applause came even from fellow-writers who, at a party mere days earlier, had heard the great man admit that he hadn't yet written all those introductions to the stories.

Further publication dates were announced: 1981... 1982... 1984... The Flying Dutchman sailed on. Members of its crew were dying over the years: Alfred Bester, Frank Herbert, Clifford Simak, plus a whole crowd of lesser names... What had gone wrong? Ellison was ill, friends said – but he always seemed to rally when he needed to script movies or TV shows, make outspoken public appearances or denounce his foes. He's so famous for vitriol and invective that few dared to tackle him head-on about the anthology from hell. Some who decided the venture was doomed and withdrew their stories were given a very bad time indeed.

Rob Scott

"Like the Flying Dutchman, *The Last Dangerous Visions* now sails with dead men in its crew, its grisly fame increasing by the year."

Such is the fame of *TLDV* that a whole non-fiction book has been written about it: *The Book on the Edge of Forever* (Fantagraphics Books, 1994) by Christopher Priest, whose title ironically echoes Ellison's Hugo-winning *Star Trek* script. Priest traces the story in detail, with documentation and eye-witness accounts, and reckons that *TLDV* is too unwieldy to be published, and too full of old material from authors who have since learned to write better: "It is a book that is no longer possible."

When Priest first muttered this, Ellison issued a 1988 counterblast stating that the project was occupying most of his time... However, even now, in 1995, it still remains on the edge of forever.

I talked to Harlan Ellison myself last year, and he managed to sound genuinely hurt and surprised that, despite minor delays since 1972, anyone could doubt that *TLDV* would soon appear. We must have faith. Occasional rats may scuttle overboard, but the vessel from the '60s ploughs onward with Captain Ellison still unbowed at its helm, his eyes now firmly set on the horizon of the 21st century. As yet, it is a story with no end.

David Langford, author of many books and short stories, has won a deeply embarrassing number of Hugo awards.

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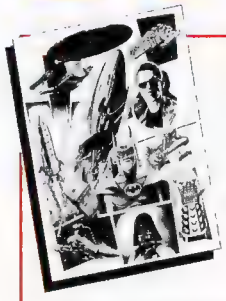

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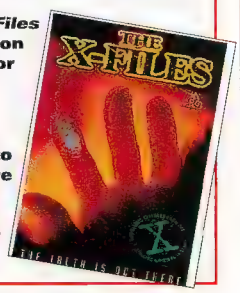

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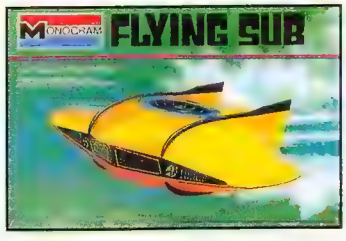

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John Grant

Fantasy at 26 Frames per Second

At this year's Microcon (a small convention held every year at Exeter University), a panel of us were asked one of those dreaded half-dozen unanswerable questions: "What's your favourite fantasy novel?"

This time, however, I had an answer. I promptly responded that, apart from my own works (!), my favourite fantasy novel of all time had to be *Winter's Tale* by Mark Helprin. A few faces in the audience suddenly became bright and cheery; most looked blank. I (and fellow panellist Colin Greenland) said a few evangelising words about the book, and then went home feeling that, by spreading the word, I'd in some small way contributed to modern fantasy's well-being.

A few days later, though, I began to worry. After all, Helprin's work was published in 1983 – that's 12 years ago. Weren't there any more recent fantasies that had given me the same thrill?

Well, there've been a few. Robin McKinley's *Beauty,* for instance. Oh no, that was published in 1978. Okay, what about Stephen Marley's 'Chinoiserie' *Mortal Mask?* Now that's more like it: 1991. Then there's Fay Sampson's *Taliesin's Telling* from the same year, a couple of Sheri S Tepper's fantasies-set-in-SF-venues, notably *Raising the Stones* (1990), and maybe a handful of others. Friends to whom I've made this complaint have recommended Michael Swanwick's *The Iron Dragon's Daughter,* published in 1993.

But – and here's the bit that hurts the most – I've lost count of the number of really excellent post-1983 fantasy movies I've seen. I don't mean great movies that happen to be fantasies either: I mean first-rate, mature fantasies that have been couched in movie form.

Rob Scott

"*Last Action Hero*... stepped into the great, glorious playground that is the territory of every fantasy creator, and, well, it played there."

Take, for example, *Last Action Hero.* That's right – the $60 million loser excoriated by the mainstream critics. It took a fairly standard fantasy notion – that the people behind the movie screen are just as real as the people in front of it – but then, instead of lapsing into a series of clichés, extended the idea down a whole bundle of avenues; some logical (in a movie universe there's no reason a cartoon cat shouldn't be a respected police officer, for instance), others deliriously loopy (the appearance on the streets of Death from Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* springs immediately to mind).

Watching it, I can remember thinking: "This is what fantasy's supposed to be all about." It gave me the same zing I'd got from reading *Winter's Tale.*

What made a movie like *Last Action Hero* a mature fantasy was not the originality of its parts – as noted, its initial premise is fairly orthodox – but the way in which it utilised the elements of "hard fantasy" as its basic tools. (This was probably why the mainstream critics disliked it so much: they were flummoxed by concepts that you or I would regard as standard ingredients in the fantasy stockpot.) It stepped into the glorious playground that is the territory of every fantasy creator, and, well, it played there. It was packed with imagination.

The sad thing is, you can read a lot of modern fantasy novels before you find one that's packed with imagination. You can wade through the doorstops – some of them extremely well written – by writers like Robert Jordan, David Gemmell or Terry Brooks, and peer long and hard before you detect the slightest scintilla of that liberating spark which distinguishes fantastic literature from other artforms. Or you can wallow in the mire of fantasies issued routinely by our major publishing houses, where you find such a dearth of creative imagination no fantasist would dare present it as fiction.

Or you could watch *Time Bandits.* Or *Who Framed Roger Rabbit.* Or *Stay Tuned.* Or *Cool World.* Or even, God help us, a truly bad movie, like *Stargate* (reviewed page 69) – which is at least trying. Or a score of others.

It's a shameful state of affairs. Written fantasy is supposed to be at the vanguard of the genre, exploring all the new territories, with the movies tagging along behind – as is generally the case in SF. But our writers – and, more significantly, our publishers – seem complacent enough to let the initiative slip into the movie producer's hands. It's a current wisdom of the book trade that, unless the book's a Pratchett, the fantasy market is "very conservative" and won't tolerate an excess of imagination or originality – in other words, book people reckon you and I are *frightened* of anything too strange, imaginative or (heaven forbid) mind-opening.

This conjures up the intriguing picture of us as timorous fantasy readers, wary of having our sensibilities disturbed, suddenly becoming different people – vibrant, shiny-eyed and adventurous – when we go to the movies. No, no – surely *that's* fantasy.

John Grant has written numerous science fiction and fantasy novels, including The Truth about the Flaming Ghoulies, Albion, *and* The World. *His views on* Last Action Hero *are entirely his own.*

Whose Who?

JUST WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO DOCTOR WHO? SINCE THE SHOW ABRUPTLY LEFT BBC 1 AT THE END OF '89, WE'VE HEARD ALL SORTS OF RUMOURS. DAVID HASSELHOFF IS THE NEW DOCTOR! LEONARD NIMOY WILL DIRECT THE MOVIE! THERE'LL BE BONKING IN THE TARDIS! THE HENSON CREATURE SHOP IS DESIGNING THE NEW DALEKS! AND IT'S ALL TRUE, AT LEAST IF YOU BELIEVE THE PAPERS. DAVE GOLDER DIDN'T, AND MADE IT HIS BUSINESS TO SORT OUT THE TRUTH FROM THE TALL STORIES...

Television lifespans in excess of 20 years are usually reserved for soap operas, news bulletins and *The Sky At Night*. Drama series rarely make it past five years, let alone run into double figures. So 26 years for a cheap, quirky SF series is nothing short of a miracle. But for *Doctor Who* fans, even that isn't long enough.

Ever since the last BBC series came to an abrupt end in December 1989, rumours of the programme's revival, both on the small and big screen, have been more widespread than sightings of Elvis. Actors as diverse as Tom Cruise, Tim Curry and Jane Seymour have been hailed in the press as the eighth Doctor, while Spielberg, Ridley Scott and Leonard Nimoy have all, at various times, been linked to multifarious film and TV projects.

But it's not all been idle gossip. Some of these projects *have* come painfully close to reality – and, even worse, a few of the most instantly guffaw-worthy casting decisions "revealed" in the popular press have actually had elements of truth to them. However, none, bar one embarrassing exception, have made it anywhere near to the screen. Yet.

That's not to say *Doctor Who* is completely dead. Far from it. During the official Doctor's hiatus, all sorts of alternative Who productions have been thriving – fan-produced video dramas, original novels, radio series, everything except *avant garde* mime theatre productions. If *Doctor Who* comes back, it won't be a resurrection, because the character never died – he's just been getting by on a slightly rickety home-made iron lung for a while.

So do you want to know what's been happening? What's been going on behind those corporate closed doors? Then get ready for the complete guide to *Doctor Who:* The Drip-Feed Years – the truth, the rumour and the scandal, warts and all.

© Steve Caplin

Doctor Who: The Drip-Feed Years

7.35PM, 6 DECEMBER 1989: Part three of "Survival" is the last new episode of *Doctor Who* to be broadcast to date. Ratings have been disastrously low for the latest season – around 4-5 million. The Sun screams the show is to be cancelled.

Nonsense, says the BBC. It's just that "the gap between seasons might be longer than most." Little did anyone suspect.

The corporation announces that it is looking into independent production for the show. A decision will be made early in 1990.

"Doctor Who has lasted 26 years, and I can't see any reason why it shouldn't continue," Peter Creegan had announced at a press conference in October. He added that a variety of options were available to the BBC, but that it wanted to see, "a *Doctor Who* for the '90s." He also admitted that *Doctor Who* contributes "over £2 million" per year to the BBC through overseas sales and licensing.

Donald Sutherland is rumoured in the press to be the star of the *Doctor Who* movie being developed by production company Coast To Coast. This is a project which dates back to July 1987 when Coast To Coast brought the rights from the BBC. Back then, Tim Curry (of *Rocky Horror* fame) was the Who favourite. A script had been written by *Doctor Who* and *Space: 1999* veteran, Johnny Byrne.

JANUARY 1990: Dalek creator Terry Nation and Cyberman scribe

The Stranger: Colin Baker redeems himself?

Let's face it – Colin Baker's Doctor was never the most popular with the general public. But, so the story goes, he never got the chance on TV to play the character the way he wanted to. And if his performance as the lead character in the BBV series of *The Stranger*, now released on video, is anything to go by, that's a real shame.

The Stranger first appeared in 1987, before the TV show had even been "suspended," and initially it was very much a *Doctor Who* clone – featuring a mysterious alien with a pretty companion. Colin Baker, however, played the lead role very differently, as director Bill Baggs explains.

"I was very aware of the history of Colin's time on *Doctor Who*, and that he maybe hadn't been given much opportunity to explore a character that is fundamentally quite fascinating. It seemed to me that his performance was quite superficial, and wasn't doing him justice. I wanted to draw out the darker side of the performance, rather than the aggression.

"Colin is pleased with the way the videos have turned out, particularly how they've developed recently. I think he feels a little bit that the early ones were like a pastiche, cod-version of *Doctor Who*. It's now obviously taken off in a completely different direction."

So what have the changes been?

"It's now more about three characters – Solomon (played by Colin Baker), Egan and Saul: the three terrorists. Saul's the git, then we've got Egan who's trying to keep control over Saul, and who ultimately really believes in the cause. And Solomon who's rebelling against all that, but who can't detach himself entirely because that's his past. And they can travel anywhere through The Web."

So how did he get involved in all this?

"I was working for the BBC as a video editor and had always had aspirations to direct. I was also a member of the BBC Film Club. Basically, my interest in *Doctor Who* collided with my film-making aspirations and I thought: 'Wouldn't it be good to do something along the lines of *Doctor Who?*'

"At that stage, I didn't know if it would sell, but I obviously had a fair idea that it would be popular. And it was a good way of covering the costs of making a film. Now the films are being distributed by Pickwick, and it's all got a lot more commercial."

WHILE HIS SPIELBERGNESS UMS AND AHS ABOUT HIS INCREASINGLY-UNLIKELY US VERSION OF DOCTOR WHO, BRIT FANS HAVE GOT TIRED OF WAITING AND ARE ALREADY PRODUCING THEIR OWN...

"Airzone" was actually director Bill Baggs' first departure from *The Stranger* series, and featured four ex-Doctors.

"'Summoned By Shadows' was the first project. And I was very lucky in getting Colin and Nicola Bryant (Peri in *Doctor Who*) involved. Initially, it wasn't done with a series idea in mind. It really was a one-off, but the reaction to it was so positive I decided to do another one."

Next up was "More Than A Messiah," followed by "In Memory Alone," "The Terror Game," "Breach of the Peace" and, just out, "Eye of the Beholder." Bill has also directed two non-*Stranger* stories, "The Airzone Solution" and "Zero Imperative," for which he lured in other ex-Doctors, Peter Davison, Jon Pertwee and Sylvester McCoy, all playing in interesting ways against their *Doctor Who* personae.

"I think Jon Pertwee has thoroughly enjoyed doing 'Airzone' and particularly 'Zero Imperative'," Bill says, "because a) he enjoys working with me, which is nice, and b) he likes the opportunity to do something a bit differently. And Sylvester feels the same."

The latest BBV (Bill Baggs Video) project is also the biggest *The Stranger* production yet. And the most adult, it would seem.

"'Eye of the Beholder' is a 15 certificate, which is a bit annoying. It's 90 minutes long, and the script is the strongest I've ever done. The performances are very strong indeed, and at this level that's what it's all about. There's no way I can compete with *Star Wars*, but so long as I can get the stories straight, the performances strong enough and the lighting looking reasonable, then I'm happy really."

Bill has also just receive clearance for his next non-*Stranger*-related project, which will be his most ambitious, and expensive, so far – *Cyber-War*.

"Cybermen, to me, are the most frightening enemy in *Doctor Who*," he enthuses. "They're tall, they can do anything a human can, only they're far stronger. What I would look to do is explore every opportunity to make a very powerful war film, with the Cyberman as very strong enemies. I'm hoping it'll get picked up for broadcast.

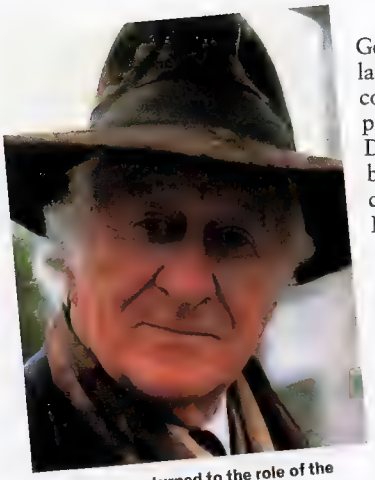
"I've also got an idea for the BBC at the minute, but I can't reveal anything about that. However, it is science fiction related."

Hey, this could be the start of something big. Stranger things have happened.

For more details, contact BBV, World Leisure Corporation, Metro-Color Building, 22 Soho Square, London W1V 5FJ.

The latest entry in *The Stranger* series, "Eye of the Beholder," is the longest to date, stretching over two tapes. It's also the most "adult," and actually carries a 15 rating, not PG (as it says on this pre-release cover).

Colin Baker has relished the opportunity to create a Who-like character who is more in tune with how he would have played the part on TV given free rein.



Jon Pertwee returned to the role of the Doctor in 1994 when BBC Radio 5 broadcast "The Paradise of Death."

Gerry Davis join forces to become the latest in a growing list of independent companies apparently interested in producing a new *Doctor Who*. Gerry Davis announces that their bid is being backed by two major American companies. "We want to maintain the British flavour of the show," he says, "but add the pace and action of American TV drama."

MARCH 1990: The short-lived BSB goes on air. *Doctor Who* is broadcast from the first episode, "An Unearthly Child," onwards at 5.30pm on Sundays. Fans whinge about adverts and station logos in the corner of the screen – it makes their video copies look so tatty.

APRIL 1990: Peter Litten, co-producer of the *Doctor Who* movie, says that the film will probably cost between £10-30 million (hardly a blockbuster budget, even back then). A star is still being sought, but one of the companions is confirmed as an "earth youth" – which usually translates in science fiction as an obnoxious, hyper-intelligent teenager.

MAY 1990: Either Albert Finney or one-time Monty Python John Cleese will play the Doctor in the big screen version, according to a American showbiz reporter Marilyn Beck in her syndicated US newspaper column. The film will be directed by Bob *(Porky's)* Clark, and based in Washington DC. Oh, very SF. Nothing else is ever heard of this project.

JULY 1990: More details about the movie are released. A new TARDIS interior will be designed at a cost of £150,000. Caroline Munro becomes the only firm piece of casting ever in the history of the film. She will play the main baddie, Zilla. John Nathan Turner, *Doctor Who's* final TV producer (who cast arguably the three most unpopular Doctors with the general public, and saw ratings plunge), claims: "I've seen the script and it's excellent. It will make a very good film."

NOVEMBER 1990: 30 November, and the BBC receive around 1,000 calls from fans on the first *Doctor Who* "Day of Action."

FEBRUARY 1991: *The Daily Mail* reports that the BBC has to date received over £7,500 worth of cheques made payable to "Doctor Who" from fans who want to see the programme back on the air.

An extended "director's cut" video version of the McCoy story, "The Curse of Fenric," goes on sale and becomes the fastest-selling *Doctor Who* video ever. BBC Video starts looking for other ways to sell *Doctor Who* material other than just releasing old stories. Over the next couple of years a number of "specials" are produced, including "The Hartnell Years," "The Troughton Years," "The Pert..." Well, you get the idea. Sales are disappointing. Many of them are commissioned by John Nathan Turner, who is dropped by BBC Enterprises after a six-month contract expires.

MARCH 1991: Leaked reports from the BBC suggest that an announcement about a new series is imminent. Then, nothing.

Rutger Hauer is the latest name connected with the movie Who, although apparently his reluctance to give up his lucrative Guinness adverts deal to maintain the Doctor's clean-cut image puts the kibosh on this idea.

MAY 1991: The BBC finally confirms that the new series will be independently produced... If it ever gets produced at all.

JUNE 1991: Virgin Books starts publishing the *New Adventures* series of novels, featuring the McCoy Doctor and Ace. The books are an instant hit, and eventually lead to the *Missing Adventures*, featuring earlier Doctors.

Shepperton Studios is reported to be gearing up to produce a science fiction series during 1992. Immediately, the rumours begin that it will be *Doctor Who*.

ITV • C4 • BBC TV & RADIO • SATELLITE
Radio Times
LOOK WHO'S BACK IN
What force far, good could bring the Doctor back to TV on his 30th anniversary?
Children in Need!

Doctor Who may have been "resting" for four years, but the BBC still featured him on the cover of *Radio Times* in 1993...

JULY 1991: Shepperton Studios says it hasn't got a clue what everybody is going on about as far as Doctor Who is concerned.

Broadcast magazine, an industry trade paper, announces that a series of *Doctor Who* will go into production in 1992. But not at Shepperton, presumably.

Some independent production companies, including ex-*Doctor Who* producer Derrick Sherwin, complain that the BBC still has not contacted them. "Never put down to conspiracy that which can be explained by incompetence," says the ever-optimistic *Doctor Who* scribe Terrance Dicks (whose income must have dropped sharply since the series went off the air and he ran out of stories to novelise).

> "Doctor Who is too valuable a property to relaunch until we are absolutely confident of it as a major success once again."
>
> The BBC, August '91

AUGUST 1991: At some point Coast To Coast has changed its name to Green Light and claims that it's in closer agreement with the BBC over the film's format than ever. The possibility that it will produce a follow-on series is also on the cards. Unfortunately, the BBC doesn't seem that interested in playing cards. Pinning the tail on the donkey seems more its game.

A £2.4 million bid by independent production company Naked Eye is apparently turned down by the BBC. The bid proposed a series of 12 half-hour episodes which could be re-cut into six one-hour episodes for foreign sales. In a statement to *Doctor Who* magazine, the BBC maintains that, despite turning down Naked Eye, "There is no question of *Doctor Who* being abandoned. It is still an important programme, and when the time is right it should return... *Doctor Who* is too valuable a property for us to relaunch until we are absolutely confident of it as a major success once again."

OCTOBER 1991: A group calling itself The Consortium of Doctor Who fans announce that it plans to sue the BBC for £30 million for not adhering to its Charter by not bringing back the series. They must have some seriously deranged lawyer...

JANUARY 1992: A half-hour documentary called "Resistance Is Useless" introduces a series of classic *Doctor Who* repeats on BBC 2. Fans despise the documentary, as it portrays them as a bunch of anoraks.

A company called Dark Light releases a statement expressing its desire to produce a very Americanised version of *Doctor Who*. Fan reaction is hostile. Producer Alan Johns replies: "It has been brought to my attention that the basic format we are considering for *Doctor Who* has come under a certain amount of criticism... It is up to the BBC and whoever makes the programme (and we hope it will be us) to devise the format. Opinions are fine and

Shakedown: Big battleships and new look Sontarans

Everybody knows someone who looks like a Sontaran. You know – those potato-headed clone warriors from *Doctor Who's* heyday, the ones your mate Fat Andy looks like. Except he doesn't any more – because the Sontarans have now been completely redesigned to star as the baddies in "Shakedown," a claustrophobic slice of science fiction action from the people who publish top fanzine *Dreamwatch*.

"Shakedown," which was released late last year, came about when the shoot for "Downtime" (see page 40) was rescheduled as a result of actress Deborah Watling's work commitments. *Dreamwatch* publisher Gary Leigh had booked Downtime to première at a convention he was organising for late '94, but it soon became obvious that the Reeltime effort wasn't going to be ready in time. The solution? Do it yourself.

Gary and a business partner put up the money and then set about assembling a crew. First on board was director Kevin Davies.

"I was offered "Shakedown" largely because of my work on *30 Years In The TARDIS*," explains Davies, a professional animator who works mainly in adverts (he did the original National Lottery ads last year, for instance). He'd also previously directed the critically acclaimed *Making Of The Hitchhiker's Guide* video.

"Originally, 'Shakedown' was built around Elizabeth Sladen (Sarah Jane Smith in *Doctor Who*), but for various reasons that never came about, so it was almost cancelled. But I thought, 'If I can't have my favourite *Doctor Who* lady, I'll have my favourite *Blake's 7* actress.' So in came Jan Chappell, Cally from *Blake's 7*, to play the Captain in 'Shakedown'."

Other cast members included Sophie Aldred (who plays a cowardly character very different from the designer streetwise Ace alongside Sylvester McCoy's Doctor) and Brian Croucher (Travis from *Blake's 7*). Carole Anne Ford *(Doctor Who's* very first companion, Susan) also came on board.

Terrance Dicks, the script editor on *Doctor Who* during the Pertwee era, provided the script. "Terrance gave us exactly what we wanted incredibly quickly – he wrote it in a fortnight, I think. If we'd had a bit more time I could have done some work on the script with him, and we could have dressed HMS Belfast a bit better."

HMS Belfast?

"Yes. That's where it was filmed. I chose HMS Belfast because I knew that Douglas Trumbull (with *Silent Running)* came up with the idea of using an aircraft carrier as the spaceship interior.

"Although there were TV professionals at the helm, practically all the assistants were fans or volunteers. It was an 11-day shoot over a two-week period on the Belfast, plus an extra day doing model filming at Pinewood.

"Because we had very little money, we couldn't afford two days in the studio, so we negotiated to use it 24 hours non-stop for a fee of a day and a half.

"We bought the rights to the Sontarans from (writer) Robert Holmes, but we couldn't find anybody at the BBC who'd actually take the responsibility to say whether we could or couldn't use the BBC look for the Sontarans, so we just got on and designed some new ones. Again, I bought in professionals to make the masks and helmets and things. I think they ended up looking very *Babylon 5*."

So how does he feel about the end product?

"It's exactly what we set out to do – a '70s-style *Doctor Who* romp. Some things work well, and some things are a bit rough. Considering all the constraints we were under – the time factor, which was ridiculous, and the very low budget (we're talking £30,000 when the bills came in, which is a quarter of what it should have cost) – I'm very pleased."

Currently, Davies is in discussion with Video distributor Lumiere about doing a documentary on the two '60s *Doctor Who* movies. "I'm also working with someone on the early stages of another *Doctor Who* spin-off," he adds. "But I can't say too much about that." More news, as they say, when we get it.

"Shakedown" is now available from specialist SF shops and costs £16.99.

DRESS UP HMS BELFAST, ROPE IN A FEW OLD ASSISTANTS AND BLAKE'S 7 ACTORS, UPDATE SOME OLD MONSTERS AND WHAT HAVE YOU GOT? THE FIRST TRUE FILMED DOCTOR WHO SPIN-OFF SINCE K9 AND COMPANY.

The Sontarans were revamped because nobody – not even the BBC – was sure who owned the rights to the old design.

Jan Chappell, best known as Cally in *Blake's 7*, was second choice for the role of the Captain in "Shakedown."

***Four* Sontarans? Blimey, that's one more alien than the BBC used to manage, on average, per *Doctor Who* story.**

Filming took place on a redressed HMS Belfast, which suddenly sprouted airlock doors costing less than £100.

Cor! Blimey! Strewth! The ol' Doc meets *EastEnders* in a *Children In Need* special. Get the kettle on, 'Chelle.

welcomed, but when people try to dictate what should be done based on what they, and they alone, wish to see, it's not only selfish but ridiculous.

"Whatever happens, *Doctor Who* has to survive in a market that is ten times more hostile and aggressive than when the programme was last in production."

Brian Blessed is apparently Dark Light's preferred Doctor. Ho, ho, ho!

FEBRUARY 1992: Tom Baker provides the links for the "Shada" video at MOMI (for release in July). After years of distancing himself from the programme, he's finally warming to the idea of donning the scarf and hat again.

JULY 1992: The BBC let it be known that Sylvester McCoy is to be referred to as an "ex-Doctor."

SEPTEMBER 1992: Peter Creegan, Head of Drama Serials, turns down the idea of a 30th anniversary special for TV. Allegedly.

OCTOBER 1992: BBC Enterprises commissions a script for a 30th anniversary special to be released exclusively on video.

Jonathan Powell, head of BBC 1, and a man who has shown little interest in *Doctor Who*, announces that he will *not* renew his contract. Strangely enough, this comes soon after it becomes clear that *Eldorado* has become possibly the BBC's biggest flop ever.

NOVEMBER 1992: A colourised version of the Pertwee story "The Daemons" is shown on BBC 2, and is quickly rush released on video early in 1993. Colourisation of other Pertwee episodes, which now only exist in black and white, goes ahead.

JANUARY 1993: *Doctor Who* is finally set to return to the BBC – BBC Radio 5, that is. Plans for a series of five 30-minute episodes starring Jon Pertwee go ahead. Barry Letts (the producer during the Pertwee era) gets to work on the script.

FEBRUARY 1993: Alan Yentob (who has replaced Jonathan Powell as Controller of BBC 1) appears on the BBC's Entertainment Express, and reaffirms the corporation's commitment to *Doctor Who*. Yentob genuinely appears more supportive of the series than his predecessor. As head of BBC 2, he was the man responsible for putting on all those *Doctor Who* repeats...

MARCH 1993: Yentob appears on the Anne and Nick morning show, saying that the longer the show is off the air the harder it will be to bring back.

APRIL 1993: A BBC press launch on 27 April for *Doctor Who's* 30th anniversary sees Tony Greenwood, director of Home Entertainment, fielding a barrage of questions about the future of the programme. He stresses that the door has not closed on *Doctor Who*, to which Jon Pertwee replies, "the door's closing on me any time now." But the show will only return if it's glossy and expensive.

MAY 1993: Mike Leander, who co-wrote many of Gary Glitter's hits, claims to be negotiating with the BBC for a musical version of *Doctor Who*.

JUNE 1993: "The Dark Dimension" is announced! It'll be a 90-minute anniversary story starring all the surviving Doctors. Originally a BBC Enterprises project for a video release, it will now be broadcast on BBC 1. For the full story, see page 42.

Discussions between Amblin and the BBC begin.

JULY 1993: "The Dark Dimension" is off, the BBC announces on 9 July. Various Doctors, especially Colin Baker, grumble about the size of their parts in the show.

AUGUST 1993: *The Daily Mail* reports that the main reason the special is pulled is because there was a tension building between BBC Enterprises and BBC Drama, which was annoyed that the corporation's commercial arm was making one of its own programmes. Peter Creegan, BBC Head of Drama, is portrayed as the principal villain. Curiously, *Who*-supporting BBC top dogs, Alan Yentob and Tony Greenwood, are out of the country when the decision was made to scrap the show, the paper reveals.

"[The] handsome muscleman [David Hasselhoff] is tipped to play the time-traveller in a multi-million pound TV series by Spielberg."

The Daily Star, 26 October '93

OCTOBER 1993: 26 October – *The Daily Star* breaks the Spielberg-to-produce-*Doctor-Who* story.

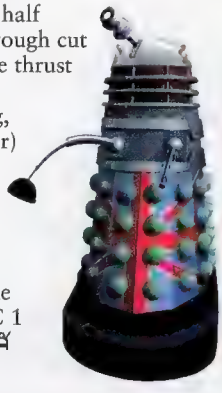
"Hunky *Baywatch* star David Hasselhoff may step into the TARDIS time machine," it claims. "The handsome muscleman is tipped to play the time traveller in a multi-million pound TV series spectacular by Spielberg. Favourite to play the Doctor's female assistant is ex-Benny Hill Angel Louise English, 28. The BBC are considering Spielberg's proposal for a 22-episode project."

The BBC confirms that it has had what it calls, "tentative discussions with Spielberg."

NOVEMBER 1993: *Doctor's Who's* 30th anniversary is "celebrated" by a travesty called "The Dimensions In Time." Comprising two ten-minute episodes, it's shown during *Children In Need* and on *Noel's House Party* the following day. A 3D extravaganza ("fund-raising glasses available from WH Smiths"), it's produced and directed by John Nathan Turner. The plot has all the surviving Doctors and a number of companions wandering around Albert Square meeting various EastEnders. It doesn't even succeed in being amusing. *Doctor Who* fans are furious. Casual viewers are confused.

A documentary, *30 Years In The TARDIS*, is a much better celebratory event. Featuring copious amounts of clips from the show and interviews with the show's stars and famous fans (Toyah gets kinky just thinking about plastic Dalek playsuits, for instance), it's directed by Kevin Davies, an animation expert who worked on *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*.

However, production on the documentary is not without its traumas. "It got to about a week and a half before transmission, and the two producers saw a rough cut and didn't like any of it. They didn't understand the thrust of what I was doing," claims Davies.



Producer John Whitson counter-attacks, saying, "What we viewed (apart from a petrified film editor) was a meandering 20-minute cut less than two weeks before transmission." A slanging match ensues in London's *Time Out* magazine, and the documentary is re-cut by the BBC.

Davies and Whitson later "clear the air," and Whitson gives Davies the chance to direct one of the five-minute mini-documentaries which precede BBC 1 repeats of the classic Pertwee story, "Planet of the

Downtime: The Yetis are back!

Brigadier Alastair Gordon Lethbridge Stewart just doesn't know when to quit. Nothing can stop him. Not retiring from UNIT. Not even the fact that *Doctor Who* has been taken off the air. Nope, he's still having to thwart alien invasions at every opportunity... And this time it's the Yetis that are causing him problems.

But he's not alone. Ex-*Who* companions Sarah Jane Smith and Victoria Waterfield also star in "Downtime," a 60-minute production from Reeltime, the film-making wing of the Doctor Who Appreciation Society. And all the characters are played by the original actors, no less.

"This isn't a cheap, amateurish thing," promises producer Keith Barnfather. "We've got one of the directors from the actual series – Chris Morris – to direct it. And it's been written by Marc Platt, who wrote 'Ghost Light,' the last ever *Doctor Who* to be filmed. The costumes and special effects have all been supplied by the BBC as well."

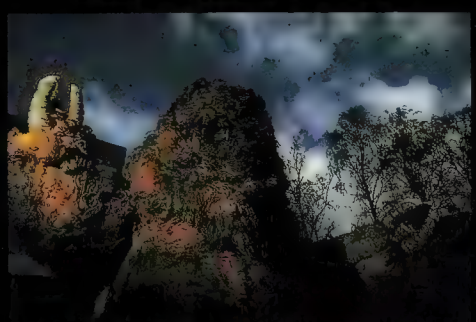
Well, most of them, that is. The main villains – the popular Yetis – have actually been given a major overhaul, especially redesigned and scaled down for the '90s. Scaled down? Yes, you heard right. These slim-line snowmen owe their new look partly to the inevitable lack of money, but mainly to the constraints imposed on the production team by one of the locations – a precariously tiny narrowboat. The original, seven-foot tall Yetis simply wouldn't have fitted on board.

Making the creatures look threatening, though, has always been a problem. When they first appeared on *Doctor Who* in 1967 in their full un-gory glory, kids weren't scared by the huggable hairballs – in fact, they fell in love with them. For a second appearance in 1968, the costumes were toughened up, but it was moody lighting and clever camerawork that made the real difference that sent kids scurrying back behind the sofa. It's a trick the "Downtime" team also need to pull off, particularly with their diminutive abominations.

"Don't worry," reassures Barnfather. "We're shooting them from low angles to make them look more threatening."

Locations for the ten-day shoot, which took place in March, included assorted London backstreets in the St Paul's area, and the concrete jungle of the University of East Anglia, where a "spectacular" explosive battle with the Yetis takes place.

RETIRED FROM UNIT, BUT STILL GOING STRONG, THE BRIGADIER COMES FACE TO FACE WITH SOME ABOMINABLE ENEMIES IN AN ACTION-PACKED FILM BEING PRODUCED BY THE DOCTOR WHO APPRECIATION SOCIETY.



Having finished filming on "Downtime," an out-of-work Yeti auditions for a part in *The Muppets Take Broadway*.

"The BBC does want to bring back *Doctor Who*," confirms Andrew Beech of the DWAS. "But it seems to think that it'll need the kind of effects you get in *The Next Generation*. We don't agree with that. So part of the reason for this film is to prove to the BBC that good *Doctor Who* can be done on a budget."

For '60s *Who* companion Deborah Watling, who played the second Doctor's sidekick Victoria, little has changed in 30 years. "It's like *déjà vu*," she says. "We're still filming down backstreets in the freezing cold."

So is she regretting it? "Oh no, it's great to be back. And flattering." Flattering indeed – the whole production was held up for a year just to make sure that Debbie could take part. The archetypal screaming companion, Debbie last appeared in the show in 1968 when her amplified shrieks destroyed the dreaded seaweed monsters. Are her lungs still up to the task?

"Luckily I spend most of this story under the influence of a Great Intelligence, so there isn't any screaming. I turn out to be a good girl in the end though," she shivers.

"It's okay for Debbie," laughs actor Nicholas Courtney, who's been playing the Brigadier for over quarter of a century now. "She's got a bomber jacket on under that cloak!" And then he's off, retreating to the marginally less chilly interior of a nearby Land Rover – a Land Rover which appears to have got stuck in a Yeti-induced traffic jam.

There's a brief panic. The Yeti's disappeared – swiped by a tabloid newspaper photographer. Minutes later, it's discovered wobbling across a zebra crossing in front of St Paul's Cathedral, with a small child in tow. It's a great photo opportunity. The man from *The Express* gets his pictures, the "Downtown" team get some extra publicity and the camera-hogging monster gets back to his own shoot.

"Downtime" will hopefully be released in the Autumn, the intention being to première it at one of the larger *Doctor Who* conventions. After that, the Society intends to start selling it through mail order, although negotiations are underway with BBC Enterprises for a more high-profile release.

"BBC Video desperately wants new *Doctor Who* material to put out," says Andrew Beech. It's a deal he desperately hopes will come off because, as he explains, "Sales by mail order alone will only cover two thirds of the production costs."

Luckily, the video should get a bit of extra publicity when Virgin Books publishes a "Downtime" novel next January as part of its *Doctor Who: The Missing Adventures* series. Also written by Marc Platt, the novel will be expanded to include not one, but two Doctors. So why aren't they in the actual video?

"*Doctor Who* is copyright to the BBC," explains Beech. "But secondary characters aren't. So as long as we don't claim this is *Doctor Who*, we're okay."

Limited signed copies of the "Downtime" novel can be ordered, for £19.99, from John Fitton Books, 1 Orchard Way, Hensell, Goole, North Humberside DN14 0RT.

Debbie Watling cuddles up to a Yeti for warmth.

The Brigadier – a man who could tell agent Mulder a thing or two about alien encounters.

"Give me anger, dear. Give me malice. But most of all, give me I-am-not-freezing-my-tits-off-honest."

Norwich University – it's a bit weird-looking and it's cheap to film. *Bugs* will be using it next...

Craig Stennett

Daleks." Hmm, Yentob is obviously a *Who* fan – when he moves to BBC 1, so do the repeats... Davies also gets the chance to re-edit the documentary for an extended video release. Recreations of classic *Who* moments are put back in. "People have jokingly called it the director's cut, but if it was a director's cut then it wouldn't have had quite so much of the broadcast version in it as it does," says Davies.

JANUARY 1994: Amblin enters discussions with American network CBS over *Doctor Who*.

FEBRUARY 1994: The latest over at Green Light is that it has joined forces with Lumiere Pictures. Jane Seymour will play the Doctor – according to *Today* newspaper, anyway. Other papers favour Michael Crawford. But time is running out before the company's contract expires. Denny Martin Flynn, writer of a few of the *Star Trek* movies, has rewritten the script. According to SFX sources, this version "seemed to be the Doctor searching for the Key To Time all over again."

The Rocky Horror Show's Richard O'Brien is now the favoured TV Doctor among the tabloids.

MARCH 1994: Amblin confirms it has brought the rights to produce a new series of *Doctor Who*. The press is rife with rumours that Alan Rickman will be the Spielberg Doctor – he denies everything.

The Sunday Times goes as far to suggest that Amblin will be remaking classic *Who* stories, and that a producer has been appointed – Peter Wagg, who worked on *Max Headroom*. Ridley Scott is suggested as a director for the pilot. Tom Cruise and Dudley Moore are extreme outside possibilities as the Doctor. Spielberg and Terry Gilliam are rumoured to be interested in directing episodes.

Meanwhile, Leonard Nimoy is appointed by Lumiere to direct the film. There also seems to have been some friction between Amblin and Lumiere over film rights, which nearly scuppered the Amblin deal.

"Tom Cruise and Dudley Moore are extreme outside possibilities for the new Doctor. Spielberg and Terry Gilliam are rumoured to be interested in directing."

APRIL 1994: *The Star* is at it again. This time the paper reckons Pamela Anderson will be the Doctor's assistant in the Spielberg series.

Green Light's rights to the movie fall through. As it has failed to commence shooting, the rights revert back to the BBC.

MAY 1994: John Pertwee announces that there will be a second radio *Doctor Who* story – "The Ghosts of N-Space" (which the BBC has yet to schedule).

JULY 1994: The man from CBS, he say "No." Amblin begins discussions with Fox. Apparently, only two actors have been seriously considered for the lead role – one in his 40s, the other in his late 20s, but "an eccentric Tom Baker type."

SEPTEMBER 1994: Dalek creator Terry Nation confirms that redesigned Daleks will appear in the Amblin pilot for *Doctor Who*. The Fox deal seems to be for a two-hour pilot in May, with a series starting in the Autumn. The police box TARDIS will be kept, and the lead actor will be British. A script is approved by the BBC. It is written by John Leekley, whose previous credits include *Miami Vice* and *Nightmare Cafe*. The script deals with the Doctor's flight from Gallifrey.

Leonard "Spock" Nimoy is again suggested as the director.

OCTOBER 1994: At PanoptiCon '94, Sylvester McCoy confirms that Paul McGann was offered the role of the Amblin Doctor. Jim Dale's name is also flung around.

Philip Segal, the production executive in charge of *Doctor Who* at Amblin, reveals to the media that the Master and Davros will feature in the pilot script.

Three men who could have been Doctor Who – if we're to believe the tabloids. Donald Sutherland (left) was suggested as a movie Doc as far back as 1987. Brian Blessed (centre) was flavour of the month in January 1992. Meanwhile, Sylvester McCoy recently claimed that Paul McGann had been offered the role for the Spielberg *Doctor Who*.

FEBRUARY 1995: Fox pulls out of the deal (apparently going for a new version of *The X-Files* instead), but Amblin continues looking for US backers. Universal begin to show interest.

Philip Segal turns up at a convention in California with design sketches for Gallifrey and the TARDIS as they would appear in the Amblin series. He also previews five seconds of computer-generated effects showing a Dalek's outer casing folding away to reveal a Dalek creature, plus a snippet of the title sequence which looks like an updated Tom Baker diamond-shaped time tunnel effect. He also announces that, "As of today, the show is a co-production between Universal Studios and the BBC."

APRIL 1995: Leaked reports from the Fox Network suggest that the US channel is still considering a *Doctor Who* TV movie, despite reports that it had pulled out of the project earlier in the year.

Fox has apparently released a statement saying: "We can now confirm officially that BBC Worldwide and Universal Television have signed a script deal with the Fox Network for the development of a two-hour *Doctor Who* feature... Due to various factors, Amblin's name has now been removed from the project... The executive producers in charge of *Doctor Who* remain Philip Segal, who is still with Amblin, and Peter Wagg. They are both British."

BBC Worldwide continues to release no more details, other than, "A television series of *Doctor Who* is currently under development with Amblin and Universal." However, Philip Segal's office confirmed that, "the series is still in production, and we are currently looking for a suitable writer." Indeed, according to reliable sources, Segal is spotted in London, apparently in discussion with possible writers.

"Expect an announcement from us confirming the writer within a few weeks," predicts Fox.

MAY 1995: So what exactly are the odds of us seeing a new *Doctor Who* series in the next couple of years? Despite "developments" in America, there have been so many false starts on the Amblin (or maybe not Amblin any more) project, you can't help but be sceptical.

On the other hand, after the success of *The X-Files*, the BBC is clearly more ready to risk putting money into SF-related projects than at any other time since the late '70s. So that's got to be a good sign.

Oh yeah, and since everybody else is at it, let's start a ridiculous rumour of our own – Julian Clary will be the new Doctor. Honest, guv. Remember, you read it here first.

To find out what happened to that 30th anniversary special we were all waiting for, just turn the page...

The Dark Dimensions: The story that almost was...

At the end of 1992, BBC Video realised that the 30th anniversary of *Doctor Who* was fast approaching. Since the *Who* range was one of the department's biggest sellers, it seemed like an opportunity too good to miss. As the man in charge of *Doctor Who* videos at the time, and the eventual producer of what briefly became "The Dark Dimensions," David Jackson explains:

"The 30th anniversary of the show was coming up in November 1993 and we came up with the idea of a special video-only story as a treat for faithful fans."

A key factor in getting the story made was Tom Baker, who was warming to the idea of handing out jelly babies once again. Baker had recorded some material for two BBC Video specials – "Shada" and "The Tom Baker Years" – and, according to Jackson, had "got rather nostalgic."

Baker's suggestion was to get Douglas Adams to do the script. When that fell through, Jackson commissioned first-time writer, and long-time *Doctor Who* fan, Adrian Rigelsford to script the special. Graeme Harper, respected for calling the shots on two of the finest *Doctor Who* stories ever, then came on board as director.

"Graeme loved the script," enthuses Rigelsford. "He thought it was more Hammer Horror than *Doctor Who*. He wanted to make 'Ridley Scott does *Doctor Who*' – a $40 million movie for a 40th of the budget."

That's when things started to get complicated...

"We had hoped to do it for about half a million," says Jackson. "When we did our sums, it worked out at more like a million and a half. So we begun looking around at other ways we could raise money. That's when we started talking to BBC Drama."

Suddenly, "The Dark Dimensions" was going to be a major tele-movie to celebrate the show's 30th anniversary in November '93. Controller of BBC 1, Alan Yentob, and Head of Drama, Peter Creegan, threw their weight behind the project. However, it wasn't only the financial side of things that was getting complicated. There was the script too...

"It started with Sylvester McCoy being found dead at some point in the future," explains Rigelsford, "and a group of warriors travelling into the past to sort out what had actually killed him. They come to a point where Tom Baker's Doctor had never regenerated. He had been kept alive by an alien force. He's a lot older and grumblier. There was going to be a black version of his costume. The other Doctors then come into it via a search through time. Sylvester was in it a bit, and the others had their chunk. There were complaints that Tom got the lion's share, but that's what the BBC wanted."

Indeed, Davison, Pertwee, McCoy and Baker all went into print, criticising the script for not being "all for one and one for all."

A 90-minute Doctor Who story with a budget of over £1 million, redesigned Daleks and Cybermen, and starring all the surviving doctors? Too good to be true? As it turned out, yes.

McCoy, Davison and Baker would have appeared in the 30th anniversary special – but only in supporting roles.

Away from the ego wars, Chris Fitzgerald at the Henson Creature Workshop was called in to radically redesign the Cybermen and the Daleks. There was to be a much more Gigeresque look for the latter, which would now be able to hover and have numerous interchangeable attachments.

The lead Cyberman was to be very different too. "It was very skeletal," explains Rigelsford, "and had some pipes running down its arms towards its knuckles. When it clenched its fists, six-inch blades would come out its knuckles."

Kevin Davies, the post-production effects supervisor, was set to create the story's main enemy. "The big alien, Death itself, began as this ethereal, billowing, glowing, gigantic ghostly thing," he explains, "which was going to float across the landscape spreading destruction beneath it." Both Rik Mayall and David Bowie had also been approached to play the main humanoid bad guy, Hawkspur – "a classic *Doctor Who* villain," according to Davies.

The whole thing was snowballing. A Cyber-Dalek war was in preparation – and, at one point, there was even talk of a theatrical release. And then, suddenly, it was all over. "In the end," explains Jackson, "it just became too complicated financially to make it work, and time was running out." Kevin Davies agrees: "What was terrifying was that only three-and-a-half months before it was to go on the air, we were having the first production meeting."

End of story? Well, not quite. Jackson immediately arranged a meeting with Rigelsford and Davies, and together they tried to come up with a script for a much lower budget 50-minute special.

"The BBC was committed to paying Tom, so they wanted a much smaller film on a normal drama budget," remembers Davies. "We kicked around the idea that there's an investigation going on at a UNIT warehouse, a kind of Hangar 18. We were going to bring in Sarah and the Brigadier.

"But then, the next morning, I got a phonecall from David saying forget it. He never did tell me why."

The Daily Mail ran a report claiming that there was friction between BBC Enterprises and BBC Drama. Rigelsford believes there may have been another factor: "There was a lot of ducking and weaving going on because negotiations had begun with Amblin," he says. "Graeme was certainly going to make something that had never seen before, which is part of the tragedy of it not being done."

Adrian Rigelsford makes a cameo appearance in *30 Years in The TARDIS*, covered in cobwebs.

Jon Pertwee and Colin Baker both went into print, criticising the script of "The Dark Dimension."

Tom Baker's costume would have been black in this *Who*.

The man who wanted to direct "*Doctor Who* meets Ridley Scott" – Graeme Harper.

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IAIN M. BANKS

ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL BRITISH WRITERS OF THE LAST 15 YEARS IS A LIVELY, BEARDED SCOTSMAN WHO LEADS SOMETHING OF A DOUBLE LIFE – HALF THE TIME HE WRITES RESPECTABLE, "MAINSTREAM" FICTION (AS IAIN BANKS), THE OTHER HALF HE SPENDS TURNING OUT WIDE-RANGING, DARK SCIENCE FICTION. FOR THESE HE ADDS AN "M" TO HIS NAME, AS HE EXPLAINED TO MARY BRANSCOMBE WHEN SHE MET HIM ON A TYPICALLY WINDSWEPT APRIL DAY IN EDINBURGH.

Iain Banks first shot to fame and controversy with *The Wasp Factory* in 1979, and has been famous for his dark, macabre, and often bizarrely funny books ever since. Contrary to popular belief, however, this particular novel by no means marks the beginning of his writing career. Before *The Wasp Factory* (which was the first book he had accepted by a publisher), he'd already written three science fiction novels, all of which later found a publisher in modified form.

This has been the pattern for Banks ever since – oscillating constantly between SF and more"'serious stuff," bringing the "M" (for Menzies, trivia fans) into play to differentiate between the two. They're fascinating books, and he's an interesting man – as he talks, he grins engagingly and waves his arms, spreading them wide to make a point. He's intelligent and funny too, enormously articulate and full of life. It's easy to see where all the humour of the novels comes from; less easy, on first impressions, to trace the darker side.

I met him in Edinburgh – not where he makes his home (that's Fife), but pretty close – on a grey, blustery day in April. We talked on the top of Colton Hill, in the shadow of the half-built Parthenon known as Edinburgh's Folly ("Somebody heard Edinburgh called the Athens of the North, and decided to build this to cement the similarity, but they ran out of money on about the 28th pillar"), the wind tugging at his curls, his coat blowing open. Even out of season, the festival city is crowded, with the rows of houses and monuments crouching down and rearing up to form so many layers that you begin to see where he might have got his inspiration for the labyrinthine levels of *The Bridge*.

Tourists flood out from a bus, circulate quickly around us in a disinterested fashion and dash off to another historic site. Dogs sniff around the boulders where we sit, pawing at cigarette stubs and the odd discarded condom. I pull out my tape recorder, hoping we'll be heard above the wind. The interview begins.

So who are you? A science fiction writer or a mainstream writer?

"I regard myself very much as a science fiction writer. The three books I wrote before *The Wasp Factory* were all what I'd call science fiction. The original draft of *Use of Weapons* was written in 1974, but it was very much changed for publication, *Against a Dark Background* was written in 1975, but also much changed, while *The Player of Games* was originally done in 1979. That one wasn't much changed; the main things were adding the drone's dual identity and the 'surprise' ending.

"I was getting to the stage where I thought: 'I want to get published by the time I'm 30 or I'm going to head back to Scotland with my tail between my legs,' so I started writing non-science fiction because you can send it to more publishers – there are more publishers who publish mainstream novels than science fiction – and *The Wasp Factory* was the result of that.

"I had a big internal argument with myself about this, though; there was a hard-line faction that was saying 'How dare you sell out, write something that isn't science fiction – you're supposed to be a science fiction writer!' But the pragmatic side won. Still, I always wanted to go back to writing science fiction and getting it published."

Often your mainstream novels have science fictional elements in them. Is there a blurring of the line between the two?

"Some things are obviously science fiction, and others are not, but I'm happy for people to read it all as SF. That's fine by me. It's very, very obvious, the stuff that's got the 'M' in it. It's got spaceships and laser cannons and very strange names, so of course it's science fiction."

IAIN M. BANKS
AGAINST A DARK BACKGROUND
CANAL DREAMS IAIN BANKS
WALKING ON GLASS IAIN BANKS
ESPEDAIR STREET IAIN BANKS
THE BRIDGE IAIN BANKS
THE WASP FACTORY IAIN BANKS
THE CROW ROAD IAIN BANKS
IAIN BANKS COMPLICITY
IAIN M. BANKS FEERSUM ENDJINN

But has SF crept into your other work?

"I think the way to look at it is that the first three books got more and more science fictional. There's no hint of science fiction in *The Wasp Factory*, yet people who read the proofs – before I was ever heard of as a science fiction author – commented on it having

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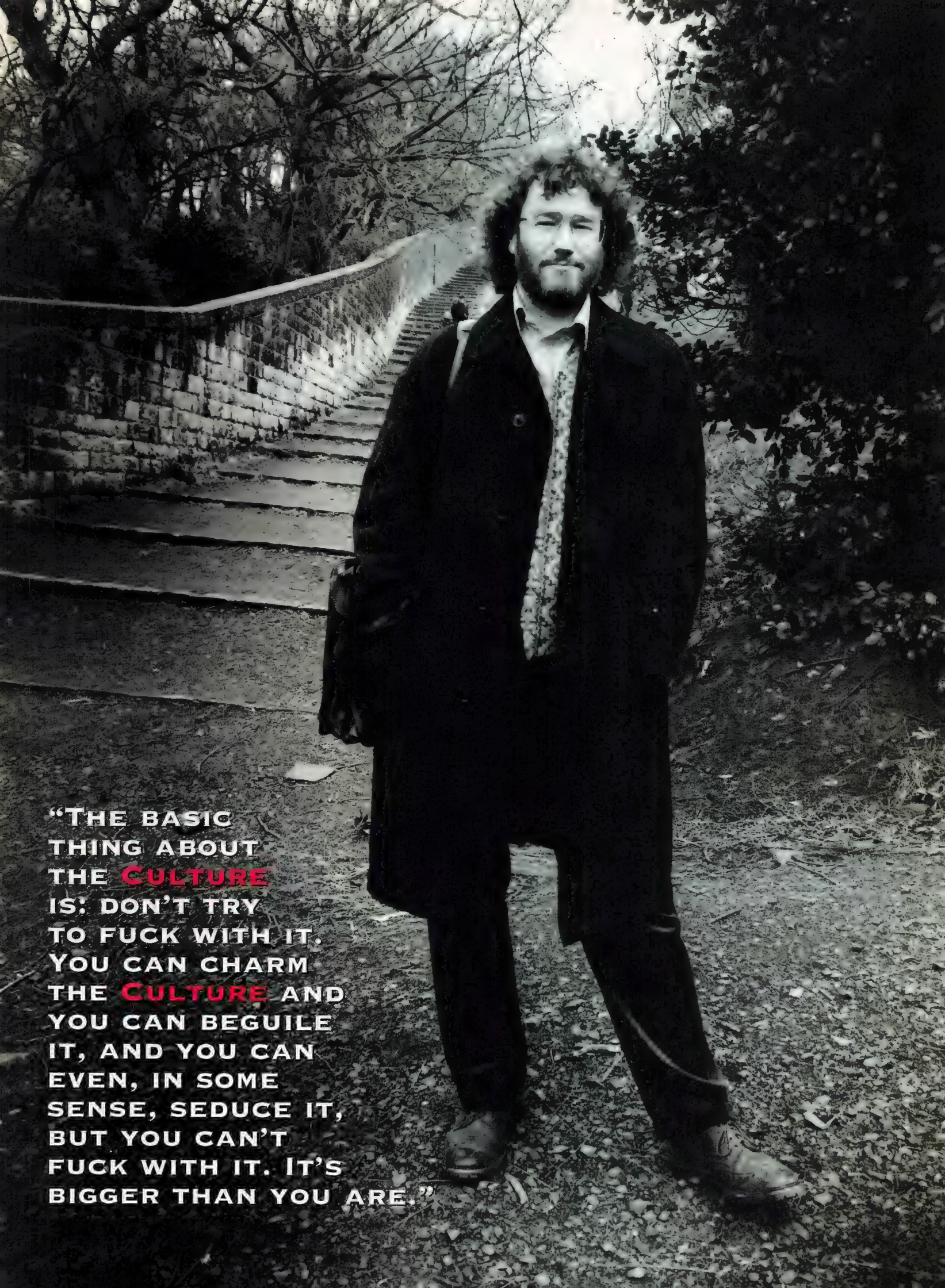

"The basic thing about the Culture is: don't try to fuck with it. You can charm the Culture and you can beguile it, and you can even, in some sense, seduce it, but you can't fuck with it. It's bigger than you are."

an SF flavour. And, of course, you could say that Frank's on a completely different planet!

"*Walking on Glass* was hard SF in a way, and *The Bridge* – well, the setting of the bridge itself, and the mucking about with time and settings, is semi-SF anyway. And the 'flying castle' is, of course, a spaceship. But the big thing is that mentioning of the knife missile in the last major Barbarian episode. That one mention has been enough for purists to claim that, technically, *The Bridge* is a Culture novel. Tenuous, I'd say.

"If you think of my books like a letter Y, up to that point it's like the tail of the Y, and after that the two types of books go in quite different directions. That's where I started getting into writing pure science fiction – and getting it published. After that, I didn't put science fiction into the stuff that was Iain Banks, without the initial, at all."

What do you call the non-SF books? What sort of books are they?

"Well, sometimes I call them mainstream, for want of a better word. Bruce Sterling, the science fiction writer and critic, coined the word 'slipstream' which is 'stuff that isn't science fiction that people who like science fiction like to read,' so that's appropriate too. I suppose you could call it that, although I don't tend to call it that myself."

What difference is there between writing the two sorts of book? Do you approach writing the science fiction differently?

"I don't think so. I hope I do it in exactly the same way. I spend the same amount of time on them, although the SF stuff tends to be a bit longer. I don't know why. Bigger canvas, perhaps? Other than that, I try to do them exactly the same way – give each the same amount of care and attention, as a lawyer would say."

Is there much difference in what you get paid for them?

"In theory, they're pretty well at parity. The last deal I had was a four-book deal, two SF and two non-SF, and I've got the same amount apportioned for each book. Although I don't know – they might be actually hiding the fact that the non-SF gets less, and just making it look like it's the same."

And how do the sales compare?

"I think the SF sells less but for longer; it doesn't tail off so quickly. Although my other stuff's all in print, still selling. I don't know – maybe we're just pretending to ourselves. Maybe the non-SF is grossly subsiding the science fiction. I hope not!"

Are there other genres you want to work in? Do you see any of your books as, say, horror?

"I like doing different things. There's probably more uniformity about the science fiction, even though it's not all to do with the Culture – there are certainly greater similarities between the SF stuff than there are between any of the non-SF books. Someone even once suggested I adopt different initials for different genres, and start doing Westerns under the name of Iain X Banks...

"I sort of wrote a horror novel without meaning to in *The Wasp Factory*. *Complicity* was meant to be kind of a horror novel as well. My options are a bit limited with horror, though, in that I refuse to write about the supernatural, so I couldn't do a ghost story or anything. I think Westerns are definitely out, and I can't really see me doing Mills & Boon – that's a little unlikely. I'm not sure how many genres I've got left. *Complicity* was meant to be a detective story, so I might well have run out of genres."

As a science fiction writer, you're best known for creating the Culture, your idea of a Utopia, but your last two SF books are set outside it. Do you still enjoy writing about the Culture?

"I'm more at home in the Culture; I prefer writing about it. But I didn't want to pigeonhole myself, so I went away from it for the last two SF books: *Against a Dark Background* and *Feersum Endjinn*."

Is it hard to write stories about an "ideal" world like the Culture?

"I think it's just that there are more limitations. Right from the start I was trying not to proselytise. The Culture's not perfect, but it's as close

"I FEEL THAT THE KIND OF FUTURE THE CULTURE REPRESENTS IS MORE FEMALE THAN MALE... IT'S GOT PAST THE NEED FOR ALL THAT TESTOSTERONE AND AGGRESSION AND MACHO BULLSHIT."

to perfection as you can get with anything remotely human – and still probably far better than we can expect. The basic thing about the Culture is: don't try to fuck with it. You can charm the Culture and you can beguile it, and you can even, in some sense, seduce it, but you can't fuck with it. It's bigger than you are."

How much more of the Culture is there going to be?

"Oh, as much as I want, really. You see, you can do anything in the Culture just by stepping down into a different sort of civilisation. I'll probably keep writing about it until I get bored – what I might do in the future is have every second SF book be a Culture novel, although I'm not sure about that...

"When I start a Culture novel, I always enjoy writing about it. There's a particular sort of sarcastic wit to the drones, in particular, that I just can't seem to get in other characters. I like using the long starship names as well – I've got hundreds of them!"

Do you have a favourite?

"No, I've got an entire favourite *class* of starship names – the Gravitas series! Someone once commented that my starship names somewhat lacked gravitas, and suddenly I thought of all these ships – Stood Rather Far Back When The Gravitas Was Handed Out, Not Very Much Gravitas Here, and the Zen one which is called Not Very Much 'You Know What'. Definitely a Gravitas name, but it doesn't mention the word 'gravitas'! They're building up faster than I can use them. Gratuitous starship naming – it's a problem, but I'm coping with it."

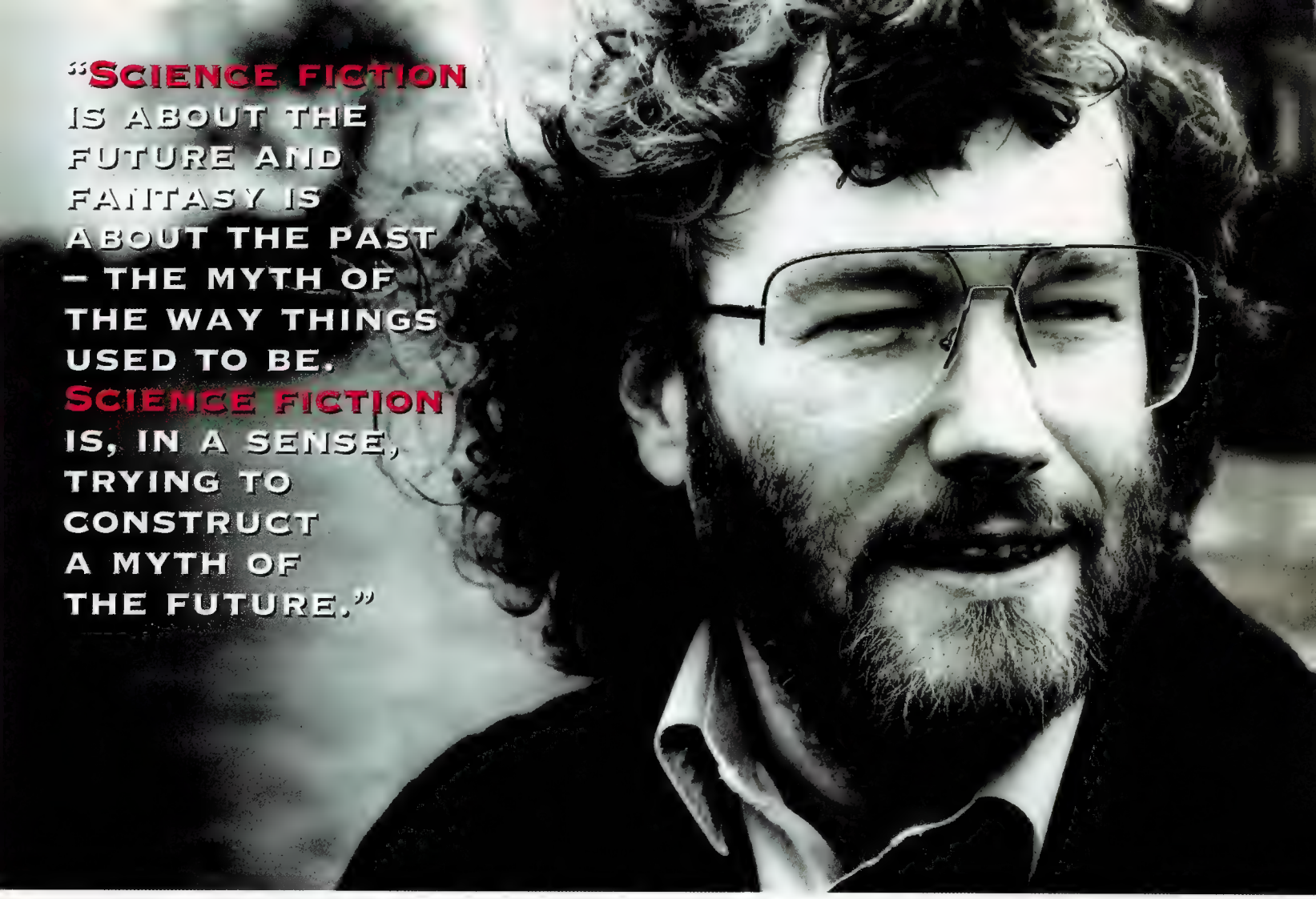
In the Culture books, particularly, you have a lot of strong female characters. Is that deliberate?

"I like strong female characters – the Culture's supposed to be a post-sexist society, remember. I feel that the kind of future the Culture represents is more female than male in its demeanour. It's got past the need for all that testosterone and aggression and macho bullshit. That's why it's quite a deliberate thing that the Culture is usually represented by female characters. It's just that I like strong female characters, and I like writing about them. I suppose I like strong characters anyway – they're more fun to work with."

There's been talk for years of turning your books into films, and *The Wasp Factory* and *The Bridge* have both been plays. Are you keen for that to happen or are you worried about how they'd be changed?

"As long as a film stays unmade, the book is entirely yours, it belongs to the writer. As soon as you make it into a film, suddenly, one night, more people will see it than have ever read the book, and the film is the mental image everyone will think of. That's a general problem.

"There are specific problems with making the Culture books into films too. I'd love to see them made now that the special effects are up to it, but I'm kind of dreading it as well. I'd love to see things like *Phlebas* made particularly, and I wouldn't even mind if they changed the ending – have Arnold Schwarzenegger play Horza, and let him


"SCIENCE FICTION IS ABOUT THE FUTURE AND FANTASY IS ABOUT THE PAST – THE MYTH OF THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE. SCIENCE FICTION IS, IN A SENSE, TRYING TO CONSTRUCT A MYTH OF THE FUTURE."

win and get the girl! But what I'm really dreading is they're going to make the spaceships look all wrong."

Do you worry that a film would lose some of the message of the books?

"Oh yeah. At the moment there's some interest in *Canal Dreams,* although I think I could only sell it to Oliver Stone. No-one else has the clout not to get shoved off the picture and let it be turned into American CIA propaganda. That, or they'd just lie to you in the first place. That's what a lot of them tend to do. I think it was Sam Goldwyn who said that a verbal guarantee's not worth the paper it's written on.

"The other thing is that, of all the books, *Canal Dreams* is the one I'm least pleased with. Still, by the usual reckoning, the worst books make the best films, so going on that it might be quite a good film! They'd probably make it into a film like *Die Hard,* and cut out most of the first half of the book."

Are there any actors you think would be right for particular roles?

"Hmm... Well, I think Arnie would be totally wrong for – well, anybody, actually. The last time I thought 'That's the right person to play that part' was for Eddie the Ed in *Complicity.* Richard Wilson, looking as if he's just sucked on something, would be perfect.

"In *Canal Dreams,* you could have someone like Arnie playing Hisako – you'd just change the whole thing around so he's actually the cello player. He'd probably play the violin, though, because the cello's a bit too feminine. Yes, I'd see him as a sensitive violinist – but actually he's an undercover CIA agent, getting these pesky revolutionary lefties. That's entirely plausible – it may well be exactly what happens to it.

"You see, I always worry about these things. *Canal Dreams* was my first attempt at a political thriller – an action book. As a political thriller it's not very good, and a sign that it's not so good at what it's supposed to be doing is that it would be so easy to take the politics out and make it into a pro-CIA propaganda movie."

Music seems to be a pretty important element in all your non-SF books.

"Yeah. One of the reasons I don't think we're going to be selling the film rights to *Espedair Street,* for a while at any rate, is that I've got the music! All that music exists. In my sad and anoraky moments at university in Stirling I'd write the lyrics, which are always the least important part and the weakest part of a song, and the music too. Since I couldn't write music myself, I'd whistle it into a tape recorder and pluck out the tune on a guitar one string at a time. But I kind of gave up on it for a while.

"The big change came when, at long last, technology caught up with my humble ability to play musical instruments. I've now got music processing software, lots of MIDI equipment, two keyboards, five guitars, a guitar synth and lots of rack-mounted kit, and this stuff is all eventually going to let me produce music. It's great fun, because you can actually change the notes, and replay it and play it back perfectly. Quantise is a great thing, because it means you can play a tune hesitantly, then quantise it and play it back without any of the hesitation – it suddenly has the correct time signature and everything.

"In terms of the rest of the non-SF books, the music helps you place things in context. You can spend a couple of pages saying what's happening in the world at this time, saying so-and-so is president of America, and this war's going on, and whatever – or you can just say what was in the charts. Mention a song and anyone with remotely the same cultural background knows exactly where you're coming from. It's a very quick way of communicating a time."

Do you listen to music while you write?

"I listen to music all the time. I'll even admit to listening to Radio 1. A lot of people find it quite bizarre that I listen to music and write books at the same time, but it's the way I like to work. Then again, I get bored if there's not lots of things going on at the same time – if I don't have something to listen to I can't write properly. Some people need total silence, but I need a lot of music in the background."

Have you ever considered doing a collaboration?

"No, no, no, no, no! Death first, I think. I'm a rotten collaborator. I collaborated once on a film script for *The Wasp Factory,* but I'm just not used to doing that. I've learned over the years that my editor's

usually right – if he says 'This should come out, Iain,' he's probably right. The times when he's wrong are very few, so I've kind of given up arguing all the time.

"But, basically, I want to be God. My ideas, my book. If you ever see an Iain Banks collaboration, you'll know I've been replaced by aliens from the planet Tharg or something!"

What sort of books do you read yourself?

"More or less what I write. Almost entirely fiction, and about half science fiction and half not science fiction. At university I was doing a lot of reading, and I'm trying to catch up with all the classics; I've got a whole shelf of black-spined Penguin Classics. It's mostly contemporary stuff nowadays – stuff that other people recommend, stuff that gets good reviews."

Are you voting in the Hugos?

"No, I never do. I've never read them all. Also, I'm not really a great believer in awards. Of course, the fact that I've never won one has nothing to do with it at all!"

What was the first science fiction book you ever read?

"I used to read all the hardback yellow SF books. I'd go along to the library and look for the yellow spine, and if it said 'SF' in purple lettering, it was mine. For years I didn't even bother to look at who'd written it – I thought there was a sort of generic SF factory somewhere!

"I think the very first book I read – someone might have given me it as a present – was *Kemlo and the Zones of Silence,* something like that. There was a whole series of them, by EC Eliot. My pal, a fellow SF writer, Ken MacLeod, takes great delight in digging these up, bringing them round and pointing, giggling at the first page. Half a dozen scientific howlers in the first paragraph."

But do you still enjoy them?

"The first paragraph is all I can stand to read usually, but at the time I thought they were the bee's knees. They made me want to write SF. What I enjoyed about that science fiction – and you know the cliché about how the Golden Age of science fiction is always when you first started reading science fiction? – is that you never knew what you were going to be reading. You knew it was going to be some sort of science fiction – it might be aliens, flying around in another galaxy or whatever – but you had absolutely *no* idea what you were going to encounter. It was a genre that was incredibly open and free in that sense."

How much does the technology in your books matter? Could you, say, just as easily write fantasy instead?

"In science fiction you've got a rough idea of what the ground rules are. Very basically, science fiction is about the future and fantasy is about the past – the myth of the way things used to be. Science fiction is, in a sense, trying to construct a myth of the future."

So do you go to a lot of trouble to get the technology right?

"It doesn't matter that much, as long as you're not introducing things too fast and throwing in too many scientific concepts. It's just getting that feel right, and what I'm trying to get at is that technology can go wrong – it can be difficult to use and get complicated in that way.

"A lot of *Consider Phlebas* is my reaction to other SF that I'd read before I wrote it. Much as I loved *Dune,* especially the first half, I didn't like the fact that it was too much like chess – it was all too predictable, all the Mentats knew exactly what everyone else would do. It struck me that in real life – and seeing stuff about Vietnam, in particular, taught me this – new technology just seems to make everything worse. It just lets you kill your own side more efficiently.

"In response to this, in *Consider Phlebas* I have this thing about the guy's gun barrel crashing. The technology goes wrong, and that's an idea I was professionally pleased with. I never get that pleased with myself for inventing some specific character or a neat plot device – but wee technical things like that, I think: 'Great!' It's a bit sad, really."

It seems pretty dangerous to be a character in an Iain Banks book!

"Yes, it is! I wouldn't like to be a character in one of my books. I saw a printout of an exchange on the Internet, with some American student saying, 'I just finished an Iain Banks novel. Do all his books end with every character getting killed off at the end except one?' and the reply was 'No, sometimes they all get killed!' It's not technically true, but it feels right."

At the end of *Complicity,* even the main character seems ready to pop his clogs...

"It'll stop people saying 'Are you going to do *Complicity 2*? When are you doing a sequel?' I think it'll be a bad sign if you ever see something like *The Wasp Factory 2*. Although, that said, I had an idea about Frank going in search of his mother. I even had a title – *The Lost Wax Method!*"

What do you see as the next really big development in technology? Do you think we'll build the artificial intelligences you write about so much in your books? Or do you think we'll ever download ourselves as programs into machines?

"Well, I still find it hard to understand how anyone could argue that you can't have machines that exhibit consciousness. It's a weird attitude, unless you repeat the superstition that you have to have a soul to have consciousness, and machines can't have that. *We're* all just made up of matter, and *we* exhibit intelligence. It seems perverse to argue that only biology is capable of this.

"I absolutely believe that intelligent machines, AIs and all the rest of it, are inevitable, unless we have a genuine catastrophe. Maybe not in my lifetime, but they are definitely coming. We're living on the cusp at the moment, and I'd be astonished if the next century doesn't have AIs. It's the direction we're heading in; it's going to happen whether you like it or not.

"I'm not convinced by the idea that we'll transfer human consciousness into machines, though. I think that humanity is just too tied up with the physical – tied up with the setting, if you like."

The AIs in the Culture are equal citizens with everyone else, which is entirely fitting for a Utopian society. It's a very different set-up from your non-SF books, which are packed with politics. What's going on?

"I GET ANGUISHED LETTERS FROM PEOPLE WANTING TO DO A DISSERTATION ON ME... AND QUITE OFTEN IT'S 'MY PROFESSOR DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ME' OR 'MY PROFESSOR DOESN'T READ YOUR BOOKS' OR 'HE THINKS YOU'RE SHITE!' OR 'MY TUTOR'S NEVER HEARD OF YOU'!"

"My non-SF books certainly reflect my political opinions – it's very hard to disguise them! That's one of the things you get to do as a writer – you get to jump on a soapbox, although you have to be careful you don't do it too much. You don't want it to get boring, for people to start wandering away."

Why do you think SF is looked down on by so many people who should know better? Your mainstream books seem to get more respect in some circles.

"I think it's technophobia. In Britain, you're either into arts or you're into sciences, and most of the people who are in the media are actually quite frightened by technology – and one of the ways they react, especially in literary, media London, is to make fun of what they're frightened of. I think they're scared of science fiction because it's something technical. Me, I like gadgets. I've always felt the more buttons a thing's got the better."

So you don't think you'll end up on the English Literature syllabus *just* yet...

"Apparently, I already am! As Iain Banks, of course. I get anguished letters from people wanting to do a dissertation on me. Quite often it's 'My professor doesn't understand me' or 'My professor doesn't read your books' or 'He thinks you're shite!' *(Laughs.)* Or 'My tutor's never heard of you'."

Do you think SF will ever become respectable, or will it always be the case that when a book become successful it's miraculously stripped of its SF status?

"That's absolutely what happens. If it's good, it can't be science fiction, therefore 1984 and Brave New World aren't science fiction. The thing is, the pace of life is getting more and more intense – we've had a spaceship blow up, we've had a nuclear power station blow up, we've got this worldwide sexual plague – and I think people are beginning to realise we're actually living in a real science fiction world. It's happening right in your face. The strange this is, this doesn't seem to be helping science fiction's respectability.

"When will we see an SF novel on the Booker shortlist, let alone winning the prize? I think that would be my acid test. Once that happens, I might start thinking that we're no longer a pariah."

Finally, the question you must always get asked: Where, oh where, do you get your ideas from?

"Dangerous drugs! *(Laughs.)* Actually, the same place as everyone else. Story ideas just come from reality – thinking 'What if that had happened rather than this?' or coming up with that witty remark you always think of five minutes after you could have made it. Everyone does that. They think 'Why did I say that?' and suddenly – look! – there's an idea.

"For instance, everyone has sexual fantasies, and they're ideas, they're plot lines – even if they are crude, in every sense. Everyone thinks what they would do if they won the lottery, and that's a kind of a plot line. Or they plan the exact words they would use if they told their boss they were walking out, and that's a line of dialogue.

"When it all comes down to it, that's where you get ideas from – from life. That, or you get it from other people's stuff, and you change it around. If you do it right, people won't be able to see where you got the idea from!"

Iain M Banks, thank you very much.

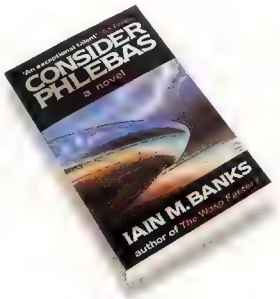
The SFX Interview

HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH THE STARS

IAIN M. BANKS ON IAIN M. BANKS

HE'S A PROLIFIC WRITER, IAIN BANKS – 13 BOOKS IN THE LAST 16 YEARS. HERE THEY ALL ARE, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, COMPLETE WITH A FEW WORDS OF WISDOM FROM THE MAN HIMSELF.

(NB Like many writers, Iain Banks thinks of his books as if they were his children. Hence some rather *odd* comments...)

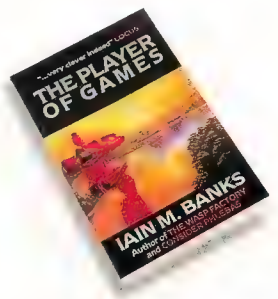


CONSIDER PHLEBAS
IAIN M BANKS
ORBIT (1987)

Blurbed as a "space opera," Banks' first science fiction novel (note the "M") focuses on the adventures of Horza the Changer, and is set against the background of conflict between the Culture and the Iridians.

Banks: "A broth of a book – not particularly bright, but great fun to be with, the life and soul of the party. Rather a Brian Blessed sort of a book.

***"Consider Phlebas* is the first of the Culture books, and you actually learn a lot about the Culture from it. You learn it from an antagonistic standpoint too – the main character Horza *hates* the Culture. That was me trying not to make it boring for the reader. By writing from the point of view of someone who was fighting against it, I made it more interesting for me and, I hope, the reader as well."**



PLAYER OF GAMES
IAIN M BANKS
ORBIT (1988)

Gurgeh is the Culture's best Player of Games, and he's sent to play the ultimate game of the Empire of Azad, without realising he's a pawn of the Culture.

Banks: "It's impossible for the Culture to be that big and that powerful and not to behave like this. By showing that, I was trying to make it a more rounded society."

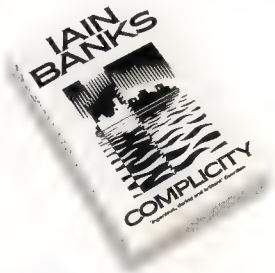
Banks Babies

You've never read an Iain Banks novel before. Where should you start?

It's a tricky question – many of the titles have a lot to recommend them, although the mood and style changes considerably from book to book. Although *The Wasp Factory* was published first – and will stick in the mind the longest after you've finished it – its macabre subject matter may not be to be everyone's taste. So we asked Iain Banks what he felt would be a suitably gentle introduction, and the answer may surprise...

"Espedair Street," he says, without hesitation. "It's so nice – there aren't any real deaths or murders in it, not even any violence. It's very pleasant that way. One I definitely wouldn't recommend to start with is *The Bridge*, though, because although I think it's the best of my books, it's also the most complicated.

"And, anyway, you don't want to read the best one first!"



COMPLICITY
IAIN BANKS
ABACUS (1993)

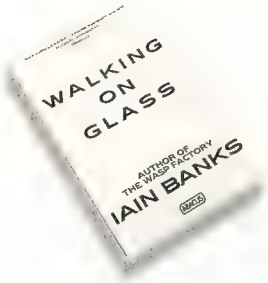
Probably the nearest Iain Banks has come to a straight detective novel, this is the fast-paced story of a computer game-playing, substance-abusing Gonzo journalist who's following up one big story and becoming part of another. It alternates between being disturbingly explicit and blackly ironic.

Banks: "Definitely a coke addict! This is a bit like *The Wasp Factory*, except without the happy ending and redeeming air of cheerfulness!"

The Wasp Factory
Iain Banks
Abacus (1984)

Bank's first published novel, this is the macabre and darkly humorous story of Frank, an unusual child growing up on a Scottish island.

Banks: "It was supposed to be a normal, respectable kind of book that went away and came back with a ring through its nose, a safety pin through its cheek and dressed in black leather."



Walking on Glass
Iain Banks
Abacus (1985)

Banks' second published novel combines the coming of age of an anguished adolescent, the disturbing fantasies of a paranoiac who's an outcast from a galactic war, and the game-playing exile of two warriors from opposite sides of the conflict.

Banks: "It doesn't fit into any category at all. It's probably schizophrenic – a cluster bomb of a book."

The Bridge
Iain Banks
Abacus (1986)

The anonymous narrator awakes on an enormous bridge and slowly dreams his past life as he travels around an alien planet, dreaming of a barbarian straight from the pages of a swords and sorcery novel.

Banks: "Definitely the intellectual of the family. It's the one that went away to University and got a first. I think *The Bridge* is the best of my books."

Espedair Street
Iain Banks
Abacus (1987)

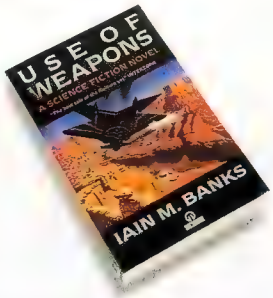
The story of Danny Weir, mega-rock star, and why he didn't commit suicide...

Banks: "It's the child that wanted to be a rock star. And got it."

Canal Dreams
Iain Banks
Abacus (1989)

As the US government prepares to hand the Panama Canal back to Panama in the year 2000, the Japanese cellist Hisako Onoda travels down the canal to reach Europe.

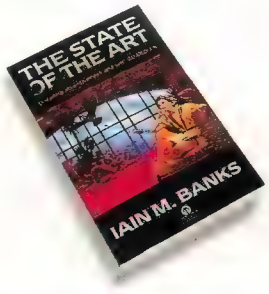
Banks: "My first attempt at a political thriller – an action book. I was quite pleased with the way it escalated gradually, so in the first half there's no violence at all, then about halfway through it starts to get quite violent, and the rest of it just goes completely over the top. But as a political thriller it's not good, because it would be so easy to take the politics out."



Use of Weapons
Iain M Banks
Orbit (1990)

Zakalwe is a mercenary, working for the Culture and trying to forget his past, but ending up reliving it.

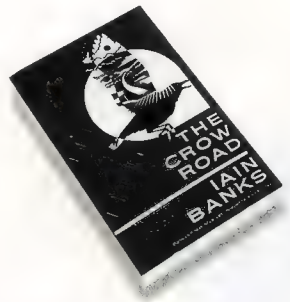
Banks: "It's more a personal tragedy. Both this and *Player of Games* are slightly more like mainstream novels, but whereas there is a kind of redemption at the end of *Player*, there isn't here. In the end, I still think the Culture is doing its best by all concerned, but it's a dirty job. I think it's the best of my SF novels, the most complex and the best structured, and the second best of the novels overall."



The State of the Art
Iain M Banks
Orbit (1991)

A collection of short stories, including the novella in which the Culture discovers Earth.

Banks: "I thought it would be interesting to see what would happen if the Culture found us. Basically, it's a joke – Earth ends up getting used as a controlled experiment."



The Crow Road
Iain Banks
Abacus (1992)

Another mystery, this is the story of Prentice McHoan's complex (and odd) family, including the exploding grandmother.

Banks: "This one's a family sort of person, an earth mother type."

Against a Dark Background
Iain M Banks
Orbit (1993)

Set outside the Culture, this is the story of the Lady Sharrow's quest for the last Lazy Gun.

Banks: "It's an SF rendering of a fantasy plot – getting the gifted team together and going in search of things of power. I wanted to have that sort of scale and do it from a hard SF point of view. It's all completely Einsteinian. There's no breaking of the light speed barrier."

Feersum Endjinn
Iain M Banks
Orbit (1994)

His latest book, and winner of this year's BSFA award, is set on an Earth far in the future – a third of the novel is told by a child called Bascule and written phonetically.

Banks: "I was just getting fed up with writing normally, and I thought it would give more of a childlike feel of what it was like to be in this gigantic structure. I've always liked gigantic structures – I was brought up near the Forth Bridge!"

What's next for Iain M Banks?

Not content with writing 13 books over the last 16 years, Iain Banks is already hard at work on not one, but two new novels, both of which are due out sometime in the coming year or so. SFX asked him what they are all about...

Whit

The first of the two 1995/96 Iain Banks books is ***Whit***, another "mainstream" novel with a Scottish setting.

"It's set in May," he reveals, "and there's a very good technical reason for this, but it's a bit complicated." Well, this is an Iain Banks novel, after all.

"It's set largely in a religious cult, and was at one point going to be called *'Cult Novel'* – well, it's a novel, and it's about a cult, and I hoped it might become a cult novel – but that was trying to be a bit too cheeky, so I went back to the original title.

"It's told from the point of view of a young girl of 18 who's going to be the next cult leader. It's about her leaving the ashram – where they live just up-river in Stirling – and travelling to Edinburgh, then to London, then around England and then back again, trying to find her cousin who's become apostate. She's hankering to leave the cult, and they want her back in. I think it's a comedy – but the jury's still out on that, I think!" He laughs, then grows more serious. "It's also about power and hate."

Although it's mostly finished, Banks is still 'tinkering' with *Whit*. "My publishers extended the deadline; they've actually got very relaxed about deadlines since Nelson Mandela's autobiography came in with about an hour to spare! But it should be out in September."

The new Culture novel

After *Whit* will come the next Culture novel, due out next June.

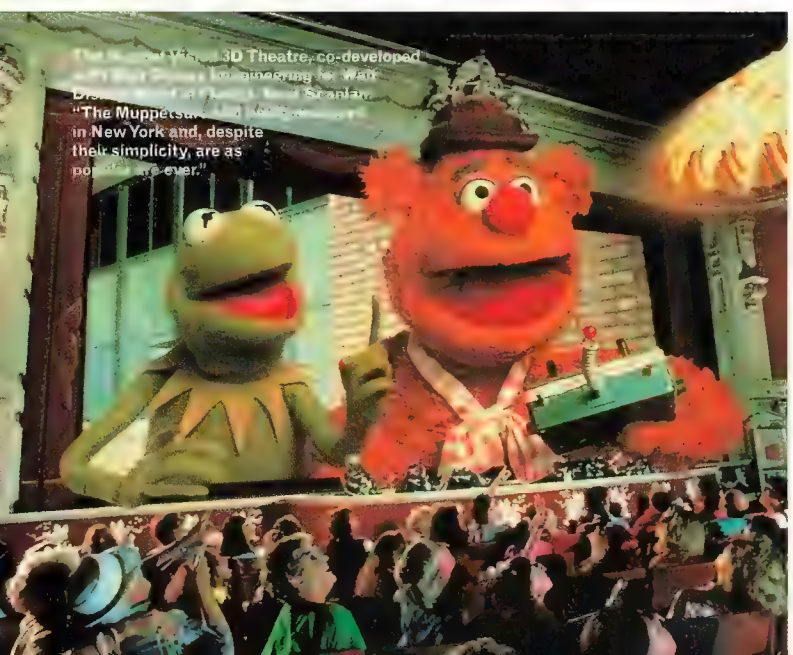
"I'm really looking forward to it," says Banks. "I've been thinking about it for the last few months. I think it's going to be fun – there'll be lots of starship names, of course!"

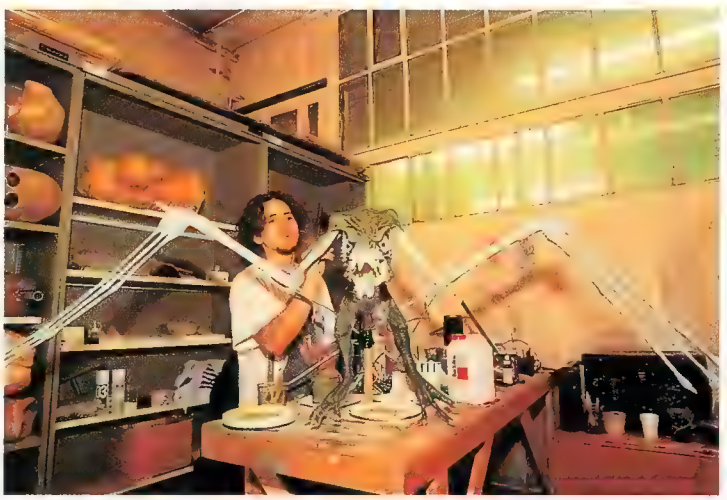
BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE CREATURE SHOP

Hidden away in a converted warehouse in North London, dozens – sometimes hundreds – of designers and technicians produce some of the most incredible movie monsters you'll ever see. MJ Simpson hung around The Creature Shop to see how it's done...

On an otherwise unremarkable street in Camden, North London, nestles the Jim Henson Creature Shop, home of monsters. Originally set up 16 years ago to build the "cast" for Jim Henson's puppet fairy tale *The Dark Crystal*, the Shop – now boasting branches in New York and Los Angeles – is one of the world's leading creators of the weird and wonderful for movies, TV and advertising. Here, a regular staff of about 50, rising to around 500 when a major build is in progress, put together animatronic creatures for projects like last year's *The Neverending Story 3* and *The Flintstones*. Other film credits include *Labyrinth*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 1* and *2*, *Dreamchild* and *The Witches*. TV work includes *The Storyteller*, *Greek Myths* and *Dinosaurs*, while, in the advertising field, the Creature Shop was responsible for the Honey Monster and Carling Black Label outback spider.

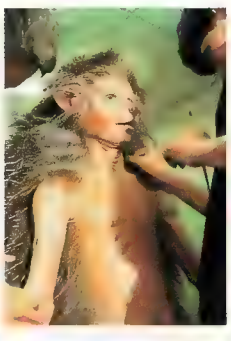
Always at the forefront of new techniques, in both animatronics and CGI (Computer Generated Imaging), the Creature Shop was awarded a special Oscar in 1992 for developing the Henson Performance Control System, which enables one puppeteer to single-handedly control all aspects of an animatronic figure. Among the Creature Shop's current projects are contributions to several upcoming blockbusters, including *Pinocchio*, *Loch Ness*, *Cutthroat Island* and *Mary Reilly*. In late April, I visited the Shop to watch monsters being made. Project Supervisor Neil Scanlan, who joined the organisation in 1986 and now serves as a co-ordinator between the Shop and its clients, showed me how it all works...



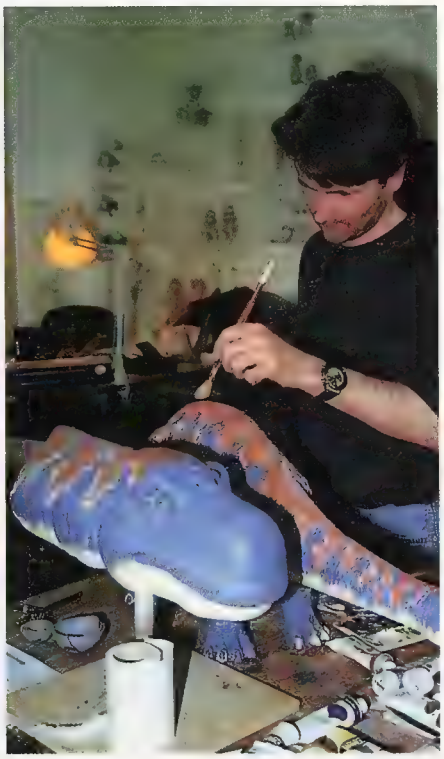


Building puppets for *Neverending Story 3* and *The Flintstones* (including the unused dinosaur back-scratcher). Neal Scanlan: "In many ways, most of what we produce couldn't be further removed from *The Muppets*. The Muppets are characters designed to be used either as a costume or on somebody's arm, and are very simple – and wonderful for that reason. Whereas these days we tend to go the other way, which is to concentrate more on the mechanical aspects to achieve the performance we need."

The critically-acclaimed series *The Storyteller* won seven international awards, including three for the episode "Hans My Hedgehog." Neal Scanlan: "People feel very proud to have been associated with that. It was internally produced, and it's some of the nicest work the Creature Shop's ever done. I don't think that's because of any more time or money – it was just pride, and it really came out on that project."



Henson technicians work on animating the legs of a prototype Dino for *The Flintstones*. Neal Scanlan: "Walking is still the thing that gets everybody excited. For instance, on *The Neverending Story 3*, what the characters needed to be able to do was get up and walk. It's the one thing that made *Jurassic Park* so dramatic, that the Tyrannosaurus Rex actually *walks*..."

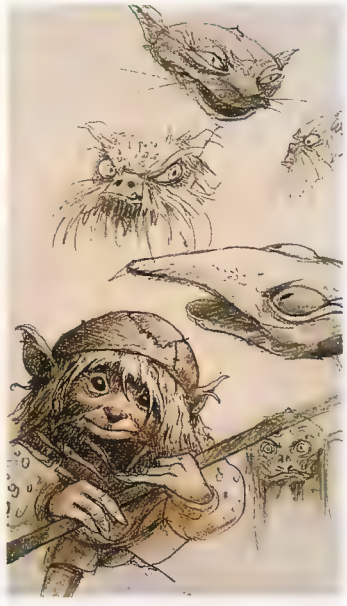


The Flintstones' brontocrane, ranging from the table-top model used to determine skin colour (right) to the full-size model. Neal Scanlan: "With films, normally there are many more versions requested because of all the different situations. 20 weeks is a fairly generous build for us. We're normally working in less time than that."

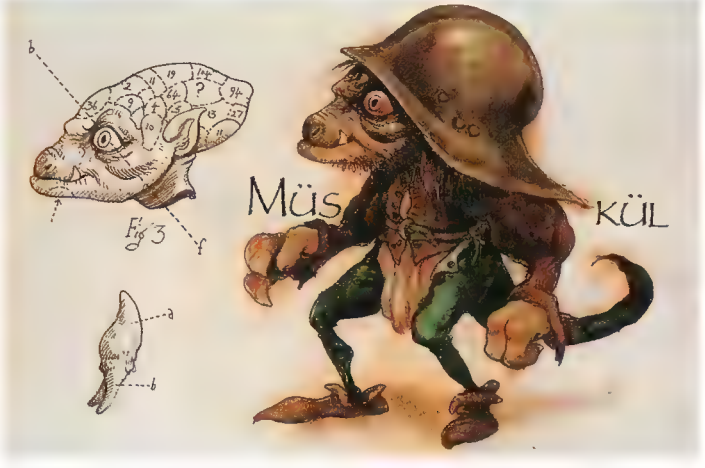
The dictabird (right and below) had a fairly significant role in *The Flintstones*, but its behaviour was still pretty limited. Neal Scanlan: "I think one thing that's difficult is trying to convince film-makers that an animatronic – in whatever shape or form – is a mechanical object and *not* an actor. That's one of the most difficult problems, helping film people understand that these things are designed to do special tasks, so therefore they have to be treated rather specially..."

Bark Troll, the walking tree from *The Neverending Story 3*, was a combination of a suited actor and an animatronic face. Neal Scanlan: "A build would normally take between eight and ten weeks. Normally two of those weeks are taken up with design. Once that's been locked down and everybody involved is happy, we normally take about eight weeks to produce a character, regardless of whether it's a man in a costume or just an animatronic figure."

The dragon Falkor from *The Neverending Story 3* was one of the largest puppets the Creature Shop ever built at 32 feet long. Neal Scanlan: "Cost can vary, depending on what the specification is, and what it's required to do – anywhere between £10,000 and £50,000 for a commercial. With films it can vary considerably. I don't know what's the most expensive we've ever charged or most complex job we've ever done, but certainly it would have been getting into the millions."



The Flintstones was a major coup for the Creature Shop. The Workshop's incredible creations – the Dino and the coelacanth fish, in particular – received a lot of critical acclaim. Neal Scanlan: "Many people who work here are freelancers. They move around the industry. And communication between companies is quite freely passed on. The biggest competition is who's getting which movies."



Design sketches for some of the less savoury inhabitants of *Labyrinth*. Neil Scanlan is keen to point out that not *everything* the London branch of the Creature Shop does is cute: "I think you have to remember that the Muppets themselves are made in New York. Creature Shop here doesn't make them. We've always specialised in television and film, and things which aren't Muppets, basically.... We don't *just* do cute."

How do they do that?

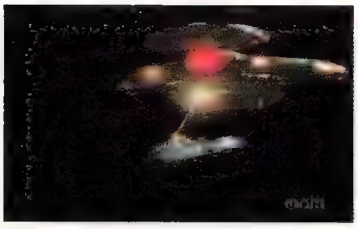
SFX On Location

In 1992, *The Dark Crystal* was the first fully animatronic film made by the Creature Shop. Characters from the movie still loiter in the corridors. Neal Scanlan: "Any character that we make has a guaranteed life of a couple of years. There's a place we use to store the creatures, packed away in crates, and it looks a bit like the end of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. If its not been reused or reworked after that period then it's normally taken apart and disposed of, or goes on permanent display – but we never sabotage one character for another."

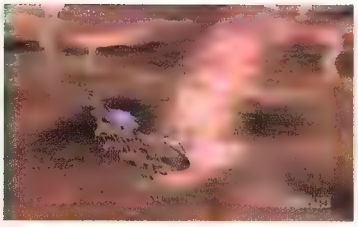
The 1986 movie *Labyrinth* pioneered the use of animatronic full-head masks, since used for series like *Dinosaurs*. Neal Scanlan: "I think there's something about animatronics, an inter-relationship that CGI still can't quite meet yet. What's happened is that people are starting to look at how they can use CGI to enhance the animatronics and vice versa, so the two seem to be coming together."

For in-house productions, like *Labyrinth* or *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, the Creature Shop modellers also design and build sets. Neal Scanlan: "You obviously have your ups and downs, like any industry, but that 'the show must go on' spirit pervades here too. As things get incredibly busy towards the end of a project, everybody piles in to make sure the job gets done."

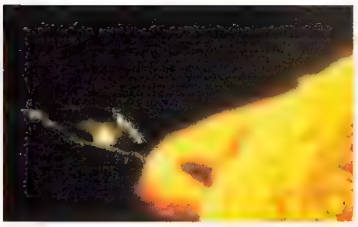
Many thanks to the Creature Shop – specifically Bryan E Rybolt and Stephen Morely – for providing the photos. All photographs © Jim Henson Productions Inc. All *The Flintstones* photos are ™ and © Universal City Studios & Amblin.



A lone Maquis ship comes under attack...

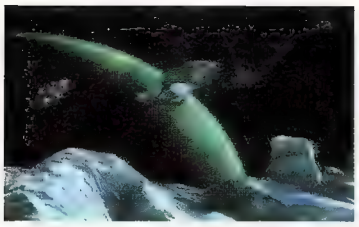


...and hides in a plasma storm. Trouble ahoy!

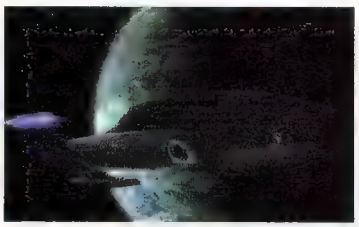


The title sequence kicks in...

...handily telling us what we're watching...



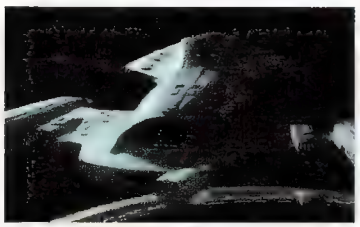
...and shows us beauty shots of the ship...



...again, and again, and again.

Here's Paris in prison in New Zealand...

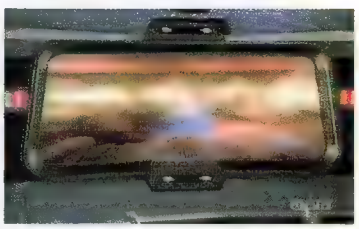
...where he meets the lovely Janeway.



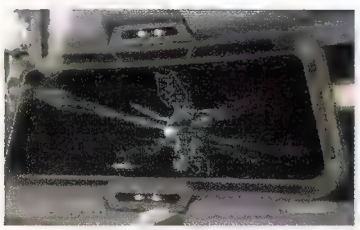
Voyager docks at spacestation DS9.

Rookie Harry Kim (left) meets Quark.

The real Doc. (Bet he won't last long!)



Ploughing through the plasma storm...



...the ship ends up in the Delta quadrant.

Janeway and co meet suspicious rednecks...

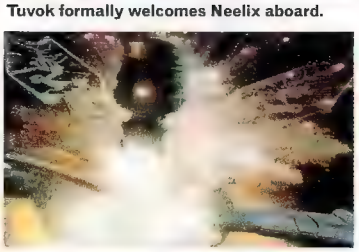
...and form an alliance with the Maquis.

Tuvok formally welcomes Neelix aboard.

Kim and B'Ellana Torres get captured...

...and meet the galaxy's sexiest one year old.

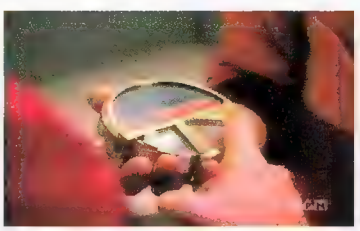
Some bad guy with feathers on his head.



One of several enormous explosions.

What on earth *does* she see in him?

Kes experiments with assorted crap outfits.



Not as crap as this "wristwatch" though.

Trapped in the past – and in *horrid* outfits.

The crew attempt to rescue Janeway.

Torres does her best to resist hitting Tuvok...

...while Chakotay stands around hopelessly.

Captain Janeway lets her hair down.

Shouldn't cute kids be banned from *Trek?*

A load of people in silly costumes...

...wandering around a carpark, it seems.

Our sexy page 54 starship captain, hair up.

All screenshots © 1995 Paramount Pictures.

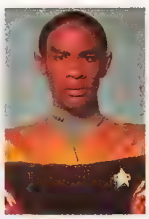
STAR TREK: VOYAGER

HOT ON THE HEELS OF THE NEXT GENERATION AND DEEP SPACE NINE, STAR TREK: VOYAGER IS ASSURED OUR FULL ATTENTION. BUT CAN IT RETAIN IT FOR SIX-AND-A-HALF HOURS ONE SATURDAY EVENING? JONATHAN DAVIES'S EYES ARE ALREADY EXPERIENCING POLYMORPHIC DISTORTION...

Captain Kathryn Janeway

Lieutenant Tom Paris

Chakotay


Tuvok

Harry Kim

B'Elanna Torres

Neelix

Kes

Doc Zimmerman

There was no way we were going to wait until July for the UK television premiere of *Star Trek: Voyager,* the latest spin-off from America's most successful TV series. Not when our network of shadowy agents had managed to secure the first six episodes of *Voyager* direct from the United States. What's it like, we wanted to know. How does the new starship shape up? What about the crew? Is the last-minute replacement captain any good? Are there enough space battles? And, most importantly of all, could we – a team of carefully selected SFX panellists – survive watching it, non-stop, for an entire evening?

Matt and Dave you already know. (As we arrive at Dave's house for the evening, he's watching an episode from *Dr Who And The Ribos Operation* on video.) Clare enjoyed *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* but continues to be slightly disappointed by *Deep Space Nine.* Maff is a *Star Trek* sceptic. Rich shares the house with Dave. I am here merely to observe and record.

Our *Voyager*-thon begins with the series' two-hour pilot episode.

7pm "Caretaker"

"Shields at 60%!"

"Our fuel line has ruptured! Attempting to compensate!"

"We're barely maintaining impulse!"

A grey, reptilian face appears on the viewing screen of the stricken vessel.

"Maquis ship, this is Gul Evek of the Cardassian Fourth Order. Cut your engines and prepare to surrender or we will..."

The Maquis captain defiantly cuts the communication link and, as his ship is rocked by another phaser blast, launches his last two photon torpedoes at the Cardassian warship, which is closing in for the kill. Running out of options, he steers into a nearby plasma storm, hoping his pursuer will dare not follow.

But Gul Evek isn't giving up so easily, and continues the chase. His prey's fate seems decided. Except – phew! – the lumbering Cardassian ship collides with a plasma stream and spins out of control. The plucky Maquis will live to fight another day.

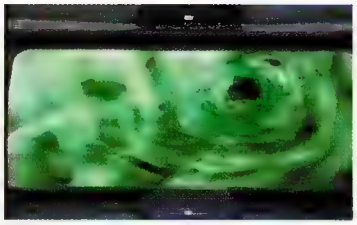
Or will they? This, as it turns out, is no ordinary plasma storm, and the ship's sensors soon detect a mysterious shockwave-like phenomenon heading towards them – and it's moving fast, too fast for them to outrun. As the Maquis brace themselves for collision, the *Star Trek: Voyager* title sequence begins to roll for the first time.

Clare: *Where's the bathroom?*
Matt: *I'll order some pizzas.*
Maff: *I'll, er, give you a hand.*
Dave: *And I'll make some tea.*

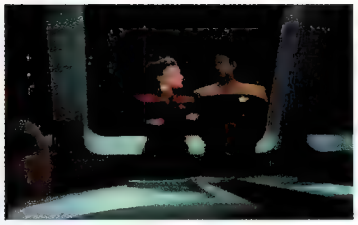
But it's actually quite a good title sequence, showing the USS Voyager flying past a series of planets and through a gas cloud. The noble theme tune is by Jerry Goldsmith (who wrote the soundtracks for *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* and *Star Trek V),* and evokes a suitable sense of the unknown.

Dave: *Here you all are. Careful, it's hot.*
Matt: *Thanks, Dave. Oh look, there's the new captain.*
Maff: *A woman, eh? I thought they were always admirals.*
Dave: *Not true. The Enterprise NCC-1701C in*

Captain Janeway looks at "The Cloud..."


...and "The Cloud" looks back at Janeway.

Kes (in yet another outfit) watches Doc Z.


In the ready room – and all set to party!

"Yesterday's Enterprise" also had a female captain.
Rich: (Arriving home from work) *I hate* Star Trek. (He quickly disappears upstairs.)
Clare: *I miss Jean-Luc Picard.*

Captain Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) is wonderful, with the wisdom and authority of your grandma, but none of the wrinkles. When she folds her arms, alien civilisations tremble. Should her hairdo collapse under the pressures of battle, she can reassemble it so swiftly that we initially suspected a continuity error. But she has a warm side too, confirmed by a touching scene involving her tedious husband and a dog.

The Maquis ship we previously saw under attack has vanished without trace – and along with it an undercover Starfleet spy. (The Maquis, as you're sure to remember, are Federation members who became freedom fighters when their colonies were handed over to the Cardassians as part of a treaty.) We join Captain Janeway as she is preparing to take the USS Voyager in search of the lost vessel. In familiar *Star Trek* fashion, we're treated to a shuttle fly-by of the new ship as it sits docked at Deep Space Nine.

Clare: *It looks a bit like a whale.*
Maff: *Or a shoe.*
Dave: (Turning the sound up slightly) *Actually, if you'd been listening, you'd know it's got bio-neural circuitry and can go at Warp 9.975. I think it's great.*
Matt: *Yeah, but I can't quite work out why the engine pods keep waggling up and down.*
Maff: *Maybe it's so it can fit through narrow gaps or something.*

Although there's an amusing cameo from Quark, the scheming Ferengi from *Deep Space Nine*, you won't spot any familiar faces among the Voyager crew. Except, perhaps, Lieutenant Tom Paris (Robert Duncan McNeill) – confusingly, the actor played an almost identical character in *The Next Generation* episode "The First Duty."

Paris is interesting because, basically, he's a git. He was thrown out of Starfleet for committing perjury, and became a mercenary for the Maquis. But on his first mission he was captured and thrown into a Terran penal colony. Janeway asks him to join the mission because of his knowledge of the Maquis. Although this will mean betraying his former employers, he quickly agrees when Janeway offers to arrange his release in return for his help. Once on board, he discovers that no-one seems to like him – particularly the ship's doctor, who gets up and leaves when Paris tries to join him in the dining room.

Clare: *Aw. That was really cruel.*
Maff: *But he's horrible. Really creepy.*
Matt: *It'll be good to have someone on board who's a bit crap, someone to dislike. Let's just hope he doesn't somehow "prove himself" during the episodes to come, and gradually earn the respect of the crew, etc. etc.*

Voyager departs, and soon reaches the Badlands, the last-known location of the Maquis ship – whereupon they're hit by the same shockwave that battered the Maquis. There's a blinding light and everything goes black. When Janeway comes round she discovers that a) most of the crew are dead, b) the ship is badly damaged, c) there's a strange spacestation-like structure outside, and, d) Voyager is 70,000 light years from its previous location, on the other side of the galaxy. The same fate appears to have befallen the Maquis ship, whose cantankerous captain eventually agrees to a truce.

"Kes is a bit of an oddity, so expect lots of 'Nnngh, I sense something out there, Captain' type stuff..."

The spacestation turns out to be the Caretaker, a being on whom the Ocampa, a race living underground on a nearby planet, have become completely dependent. (The subtext presumably being a parallel with the way communism destroys the ability of people to think for themselves. Or something.) Before the episode is up we're treated to an excellent space battle, several enormous explosions, the arrival of the pizzas, the forming of an uneasy alliance between the Starfleet and Maquis crews after the latter's ship is destroyed, and a metal walkway collapsing just seconds after an injured officer is pulled from it.

Matt: *That was good, I thought.*
Clare: *Yes. Much better than* DS9, *or that terrible* The Next Generation *pilot episode.*
Dave: *I'm not sure what the Americans' problem is – lots of them see to hate it, even though it's doing pretty well in the ratings. I'm still not sure about that theme tune, though.*
Matt: *Captain Janeway seems just about right, too. Maybe Geneviève Bujold's disappearance was for the best...*
Maff: *I'm sure that underground city was a shopping centre...*
Rich: (Appearing at the top of the stairs) *Pizza!*

While in a normal *Star Trek* episode, being whisked 70,000 light years from home with no way of contacting the Federation wouldn't be a problem, things aren't so simple for the USS Voyager. Janeway explains to the crew that even at maximum warp it would take 75 years for them to reach Earth, so they're going to have to find another way back.

The scene is therefore set for a *Wizard Of Oz/The Incredible Journey* style voyage home. And with no bungling Starfleet admirals, suspicious new recruits or Romulan-Cardassian-Klingon friction to prop up the storyline, *Voyager's* scriptwriters are certainly going to have their work cut out.

So far so good.

9.09pm "Parallax"

Episode two, and the crew of Voyager are already falling apart. B'Elanna Torres (Roxann Biggs-Dawson), the engineering officer from the Maquis ship, is in trouble for punching one of the Starfleet engineering crew. But Chakotay (Robert Beltran), formerly her captain, and now the Voyager's first officer, still wants her as chief of engineering, above her Starfleet rival. Captain Janeway has some thinking to do.

B'Elanna is another strong female character. She's half-human, half-Klingon, and is inevitably torn between her two natures, a conflict which originally made her drop out of Starfleet Academy. During the course of "Parallax" she saves the day a few times, and Janeway decides to give her the job.

Chakotay, meanwhile, is doing his best to integrate his officers into the crew. He's a native American Indian, and rather sour, but definitely leadership material.

Maff: *He hasn't really done much yet, has he?*
Clare: *And everyone still seems a bit wooden. The scriptwriters could learn a lot from watching something like* NYPD Blue.
Maff: (As another explosion rocks the ship) *It looks like the cameramen already have.*
Rich: (Off again, having eaten his fill) *Bye.*

We also see a lot of the permanently irritated holographic doctor in this one. He's a back-up program who can be activated when the real doctor gets killed. As his character develops, he's befriended by Kes (Jennifer Lien), an Ocampa who Voyager took on board in the first episode. Kes is a bit odd, and has some sort of telepathic power, so prepare yourself for lots of "Nnngh, I sense something out there, Captain" type stuff.

The what? The plot? Er, Voyager encounters a quantum singularity with a ship

The obstreperous Doc Zimmerman.

Harry Kim – young, fresh and, er, young.

A Romulan in the Alpha Quadrant.

That classic Vulcan "puzzled" look.

trapped in it. They are unable to contact the ship, and when they try to fly away they keep re-encountering the singularity. And the other ship turns out to be their own reflection. They must escape somehow. Oh dear.

Dave: *Well, the character development was quite good.*

10.01pm "Time and Again"

The Voyager is caught in the shockwave of a devastating explosion on a nearby planet, and, sure enough, Kes senses something unusual. The crew investigate the planet, only to discover that some unexplained disaster as destroyed all life there. As they search the surface, the away team finds itself slipping through subspace fractures in time, and Janeway and Paris become trapped in the past, on the day before the explosion. As they attempt to prevent the impending disaster, the rest of the crew try to bring them back to the present.

Maff: *For an advanced civilisation, they've got pretty crap wristwatches, haven't they?*
Matt: *And the "on location" bits look really weird, for some reason – like a load of people in silly costumes wandering around a carpark.*
Clare: *The little kid's quite sweet, though.*
Dave: *Kids should be banned from* Star Trek.

With its time-travelling storyline, this one seems to be trying to repeat the success of *The Next Generation's* "Yesterday's Enterprise." But it falls a bit flat, and the ending leaves you feeling ripped off.

Maff: *If they ever get home and they're asked what they got up to in the Delta Quadrant, they're going to have to reply "Er, not much."*

10.53pm "Phage"

Hmm. As the seeds of doubt about *Voyager* begin to germinate, the next episode centres on Neelix (Ethan Phillips). Neelix was picked up in the first episode along with Kes on the rather shaky grounds that his knowledge of the area might be useful. He's the comedy character – like Quark in *Deep Space* Nine, but not nearly as good – and rapidly becomes irritating.

Clare: *No, he's not. He's sweet.*

Whatever. Fuel supplies are running low, so Voyager decides to investigate a planetoid which scans suggest is rich in dilithium. Neelix joins the away team and quickly gets into trouble when he's attacked by an alien. Beaming him back to sick bay, the crew discovers that, bizarrely, his lungs have been removed. This naturally causes him problems. The doctor now comes into his own as he improvises some temporary holographic replacements – and the search for Neelix's lungs begins.

Matt: *But hang on. Why exactly couldn't they make him some artificial lungs again?*
Matt: *And if the baddies turn out not to be so bad after all, why didn't they humanely kill Neelix before extracting his lungs?*
Dave: *Sob.*

"Phage" doesn't really hold water plot-wise, and relies on character development – particularly of the doctor and Kes – to keep your mind from wandering. There's a good bit in a hall of mirrors though...

Maff: *Why didn't they just shoot at the nearest ship?*

...and we get to hear the line "I'm a doctor, Mr Neelix, not a decorator." But the audience is rapidly losing interest.

11.45pm "The Cloud"

Indeed, the party is over as far as Maff and Clare are concerned.

Clare: *We've, er, got to go.*
Maff: *Yes. Maybe we could borrow the other tapes sometime. Possibly. Bye.*

Which is unfortunate, because suddenly, against overwhelming odds, *Voyager* takes a turn for the better. Spotting a nebula rich in omicron particles, the crew decide to risk taking Voyager inside to top up their energy reserves. Meanwhile, Janeway is pondering her position, wishing she could abandon her traditional detachment from the crew and become more of a "mother" to them.

Inside the nebula, Voyager comes under attack, although from what isn't clear. The crew retreat to lick their wounds and prepare to move on, but B'Elanna discovers that the nebula is in fact a giant living organism which they have inadvertently wounded. *The Incredible Journey* then becomes *The Fantastic Voyage(r)* as they plunge back into the creature's innards to repair the damage.

Although hardly revolutionary, this is a well-paced episode with the action supplemented by plenty of crew interaction. Chakotay introduces Janeway to the idea of "animal guides," and there's an amusing revelation about B'Elanna. The doctor is particularly entertaining.

And an enjoyably tongue-in-cheek exchange takes place between Tuvok (Tim Russ) and Harry Kim (Garrett Wang), spoofing *Star Trek's* preoccupation with the phrase "I've never seen anything like it before." Tuvok is Voyager's Vulcan security chief and was the Federation's spy on board the Maquis vessel. But despite an interesting line in sarcasm, he hasn't really done a lot so far. Kim, too, is struggling as a character. A young officer fresh from Starfleet academy, he doesn't seem to be rising much beyond being young and, er, fresh from Academy.

Voyager was looking like it might survive after all. But, with one episode to go, and the pizza long since coagulated, would we?

12.38pm "Eye of the Needle"

There's excitement aboard Voyager as a wormhole is discovered. But will it lead to the Alpha Quadrant – and home?

Matt: *£10 says it will.*
Dave: *Nah, it'll be the Beta Quadrant.*

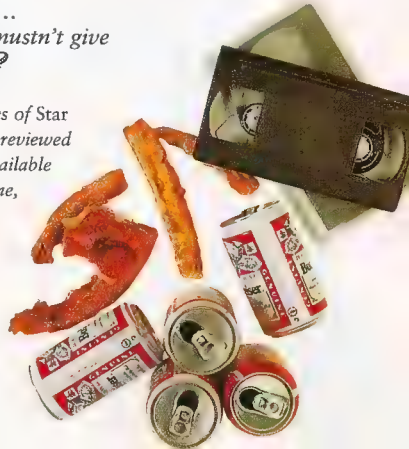
Although the wormhole turns out to be too small to fly through, the crew send out a probe which then relays a message from a ship on the other side. It is, indeed, the Alpha Quadrant. The crew then have to work out how to take advantage of the link.

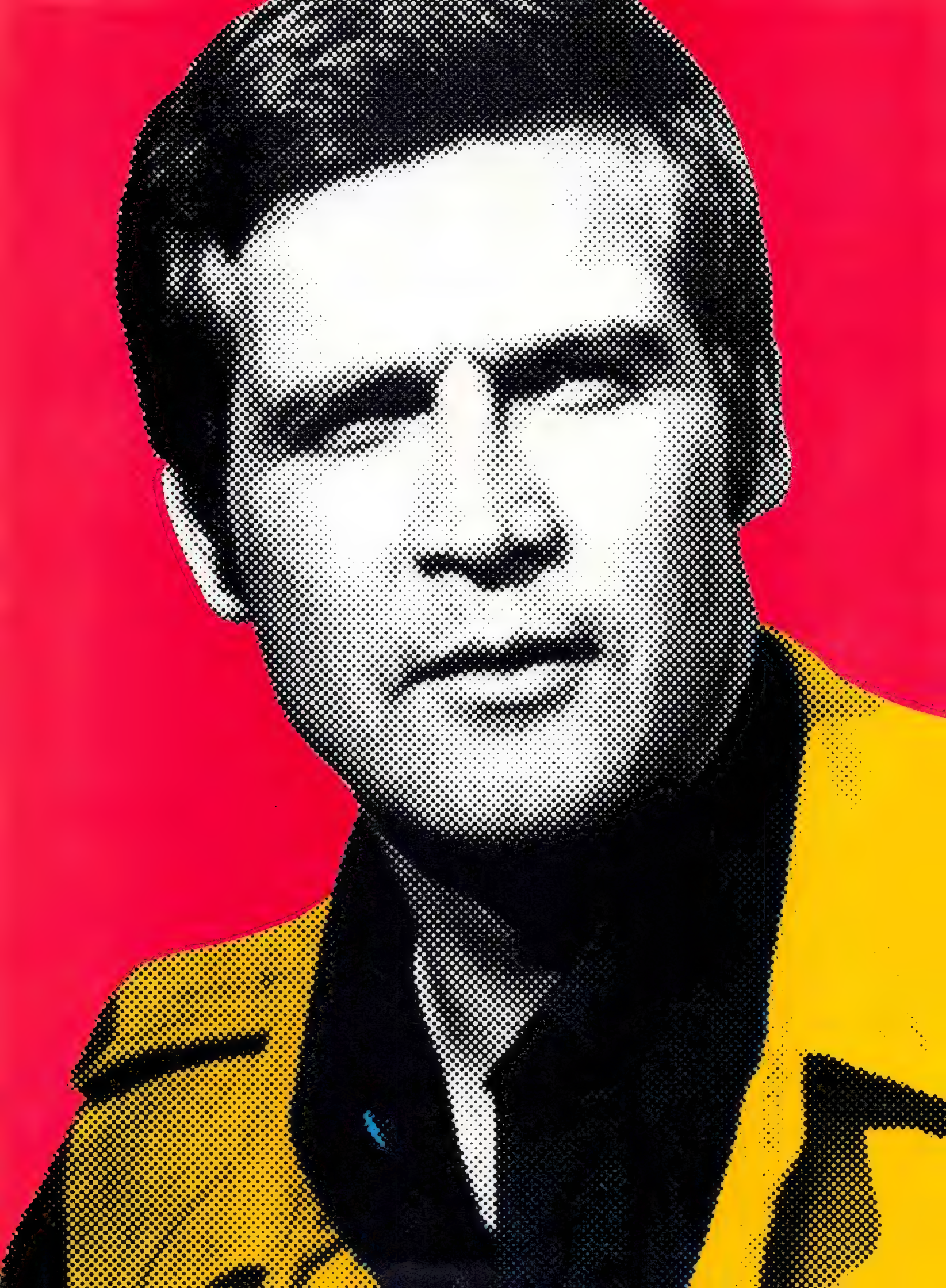
Revealing more would ruin the story, which gives a good sense of the Voyager crew's plight. (Resist, if you can, going "Ahh" as Janeway gazes wistfully at a photo of her husband/dog.) For the first time, the writers take advantage of Voyager's unfortunate position – up until now it might as well have been 70 light years from Earth as 70,000.

Kes sticks up for the doctor, who is still being treated as a mere computer program, and there's a valiant attempt to prop up Kim's character by giving him something to do. The ending has an air of poignant uncertainty too.

Matt: *What did you think?*
Dave: *There weren't nearly enough space battles, but I'm quite impressed. It seems to have the strong characters of* DS9, *but without the limitations of being set in the same place every week.*
Matt: *Yeah. I wonder if it's really different enough from* The Next Generation, *though. Are they going to find enough mileage in the 70,000-light-years-from-home idea, or are they going to have to start recycling* The Next Generation *plots before too long?*
Dave: *If they haven't already. Are you off home, then?*
Matt: *Home? I wonder if I'll ever see home again...*
Dave: *You mustn't give up hope.*

All the episodes of Star Trek: Voyager *reviewed here will be available on video in June, price £12.99 each, and broadcast on BSkyB in July.*





THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN

1973-78

Back in 1974, when "We have the technology" became an international catchphrase and cinema still hadn't quite worked out how to do Superman effectively, Steve Austin ruled the airwaves. He was, after all, "the world's first bionic man."

A retrospective by Jon Abbott

What was it all about again?

Oh, *you* remember. This was the show that began with real footage of an experimental space shuttle crash; the show where a bunch of a self-interested military bods succeeded in creating a medical miracle out of test pilot and former astronaut Steve Austin. Austin was, you recall, deprived of two legs, one arm and an eye after said horrific crash – or, at least, he was until he was reconstructed by spy agency boss Oscar Goldman and scientist Rudy Wells, all the mechanical (or "bionic") bits and pieces giving him super-improved strength and abilities. At huge cost to the taxpayer, of course (no prizes for guessing how much). The two then played on Austin's natural NASA-inspired patriotism to get him to spy for them...

One of the most memorable aspects of the show was that Austin's new abilities – running superfast, increased strength and so on – were visualised by using a languid *Wild Bunch*-style slow-motion technique, later employed to similar effect in fellow '70s super-heroics series like *Kung Fu* and *The Incredible Hulk*. The wisdom of this decision should be apparent to anyone who's ever seen either *The Benny Hill Show* or Clark Kent racing the express train in the first *Superman* film.

Early on – in the pilot, particularly – there were token attempts made to show Steve Austin's dismay at having been callously experimented on by Goldman and Wells, who were presented as a sort of 20th century Frankenstein and Ygor double-act. But such moral complexities were quickly excised from the series, where Darren McGavin's mean Oscar was replaced by the bland and banal Richard Anderson. Anderson played Goldman as the sort of father figure who'd take a boy to the baseball game and buy him a hot dog – McGavin's Goldman was the sort of guy who'd take him to the track and then bet him on the 5.30.

Classic *Six Million Dollar Man*: Steve Austin dashes to the rescue in slow-mo, bell-bottoms a-flapping.

As the weekly series progressed, both Goldman and Wells became decidedly more cuddly and lovable, a typical watering-down process that also marred Universal's subsequent TV superheroes *The Bionic Woman, The Invisible Man* and *The Gemini Man*. Although this softening could be attributed to the timidity of '70s American TV executives – who could always be counted on to take the guts out of a series after the pilot – they did actually make the concept a little more credible and bearable. After all, the bionic experimentation *had* saved Austin's life, made him whole again *and* given him super-powers. Carping on about it every week would have got boring very quickly. We should all be so unlucky as Mr Austin...

Who's who in The Six Million Dollar Man?

It's tough to write about characters without character. Then again, the absence of emotions or a tedious backstory in an adventure series isn't necessarily a bad thing. In this respect, *The Six Million Dollar Man* followed in the grand tradition of earlier stoic heroes like Zorro, the Lone Ranger and David Vincent of *The Invaders* – not to mention any character who ever appeared in an Irwin Allen series. TV tends to get slushy when its heroes meet

The more famous, later issue Oscar Goldman (Richard Anderson) briefs Steve on a mission. Or something.

friends and family, or – perish the thought – fall in love every week. Besides which, producers often forget what they've already told us, creating annoying discrepancies over the course of a long-running series.

Thus, all we ever knew about the cast of *The Six Million Dollar Man* was all we ever needed to know – Steve Austin was a former test pilot and astronaut, Oscar Goldman is the boss of the OSI, a CIA-like organisation that employs Austin for various flag-waving or face-saving missions, and Rudy Wells is the scientist who spent six million dollars creating the world's first bionic superman.

Where are they now?

A rather portly Lee Majors has been having the time of his life recently playing the grizzled, boozy womaniser Herman "Ski" Jablonski in the martial arts adventure series *Raven,* created by Frank *(The A-Team* and *Hunter)* Lupo. Immediately following *The Six Million Dollar Man,* he took on the role of the more easy-going and less po-faced hero of *The Fall Guy,* in which he portrayed a stuntman who moonlights as a bounty-hunter. In the mid-'80s, he appeared in the later episodes of the Vietnam war series *Tour Of Duty.*

Prior to *The Six Million Dollar Man,* Majors had co-starred – unspectacularly – in the '60s western The Big Valley, the final season of *The Virginian* (retitled *The Men From Shiloh),* and the law series *Owen Marshall.* He also appeared in a handful of (unremarkable) films.

Richard Anderson has made numerous guest appearances in the glossy TV dramas of the '60s and '70s, most memorably in the second Kolchak movie *The Night Strangler,* in which he plays a suave immortal murderer who surfaces every few years to live off the life force of others. If this sounds familiar, it should be pointed out that the Kolchak series was the admitted inspiration for Carter's highly successful *The X-Files* series...

Do you remember the episode...

...in which Steve Austin is chased by a tenacious tank-like robot?

Answer at the bottom of the page

Prior to his double duty on *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman,* Anderson was a regular on the cop show *Dan August,* starring Burt Reynolds, before his more famous co-star grew a huge moustache and became a movie star. It was also Anderson who was the driving force behind several '80s team-up revivals of the bionic two...

Origins of the species

Although *The Six Million Dollar Man* was primarily conceived as a way of doing Superman on TV without resorting to tights and licensing fees, there's more to the show than that. The show was based on the book *Cyborg* by Martin Caidin, which, in turn, was influenced by what was, even in the '70s, very real science. Now, of course, we have artificial limbs, hip replacements, pacemakers, hearing aids – all of which are examples of humans with mechanical parts.

Technically, to qualify as a cyborg rather than an android, the subject must be part human or formerly human, but, at the end of the day, if you're at a party and the guests start arguing about what's an android, what's a robot and what's a cyborg, the best thing to do is go into the kitchen and get drunk, or go home. Be sure to throw up over the first person who admits he knows the home planet of the Cybermen is Mondas.

Ill-fated early attempt to turn Austin into James Bond. Note Major's then-wife, Farrah Fawcett, looking sultry.

Its effect on our lives today

The Six Million Dollar Man was something of a phenomenon during the '70s, to the extent that Majors is still almost exclusively remembered for Steve Austin, despite his many other long-running TV roles. In fact, several British broadcasters are said to be squabbling over who gets to re-screen the series later in the year...

In time the "bionic" idea was to get out of hand, with the spin-off series *The Bionic Woman* followed by test episodes of *The Bionic Boy* and *Max, The Bionic Dog.* Worst of all, a cartoon series, *The Bionic Six,* also appeared.

Do you remember the episode...

...where Steve Austin battles it out with the Sasquatch?

Answer at the bottom of the page

By the late '70s, however, it was all over – the new era of special effects, ushered in by the *Superman* movies, sending Austin and co to the great scrapyard in the sky. They'll be missed. A bit.

A few things you probably didn't know about...

The Six Million Dollar Man

One episode, "Outrage In Balinderry," was banned from British broadcast on ITV because the plot concerned Irish terrorists. Adding insult to injury for the unhappy censors was the acronym for the bad guys, the IBA – coincidentally the same as that for the censors then presiding over the ITV network...

The spin-off series *The Bionic Woman* was so named because sensitive US programmers feared that a six million dollar woman suggested a high-priced hooker! Assuming that a second bionic agent wouldn't cost as much in development research, they also feared that a lower-priced female operative would enrage the feminist lobby. Only a TV executive is capable of thinking like this.

Bionic Woman Lindsay Wagner in rare, fairly ungainly, action shot.

Richard Anderson was only the second actor in TV history to play the same regular character in two different programmes at the same time. He was the boss of both *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman.* His predecessor was Leo G Carroll, who – as Mr Waverly – had been the boss of both *The Man From UNCLE* and *The Girl From UNCLE...*

The character Rudy Wells was played by no less than three different actors during the series' run. In the pilot, he was played by Martin Balsam, followed by Alan Oppenheimer. Martin E Brooks played him in the series.

In a quick SFX office strawpoll, we asked how we should write down the famous bionic sound effect. The results ranged from "Judda-judda-judda" to "N-n-n-n-n-n-na..." However, none seemed to quite capture the essential nature of said effect. Shame really.

Fact File

Cast list

Steve Austin: **Lee Majors**
Oscar Goldman: **Darren McGavin** (pilot), **Richard Anderson** (series)
Rudy Wells: **Martin Balsam, Alan Oppenheimer** (pilots), **Martin E Brooks** (series)

Recurring cast

Doctor Rudy Wells: **Martin Balsam, Alan Oppenheimer** (pilots); **Martin E Brooks** (series)

Executive Producers: **Glen Larson, Harve Bennett, Allan Balter**
Producer: **Michael Gleason, Lionel Seigel, Joe Cramer, Fred Freiberger**
Associate Producer: **Herb Wright**
Music: **Oliver Nelson**

Developed for television by **Glen Larson** from the book *Cyborg* by Martin Caidin.

Between 1973 and 1978, Larson et al *produced 102 episodes of* The Six Million Dollar Man. *This was followed by two TV films:* Return Of The Six Million Dollar Man And The Bionic Woman *(1987) and* The Bionic Showdown *(1989). Other TV descendants were* Holmes And Yoyo, Future Cop, Beyond Westworld *and* Mann And Machine.

Answers: "Death Probe," "The Secret of Bigfoot," or any one of the four sequels.

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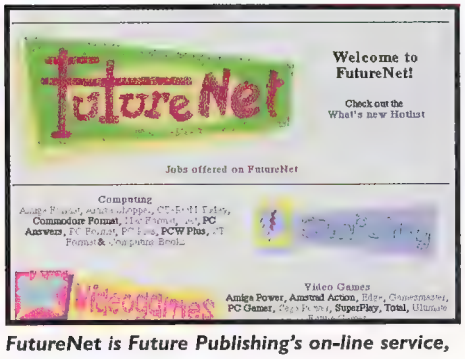

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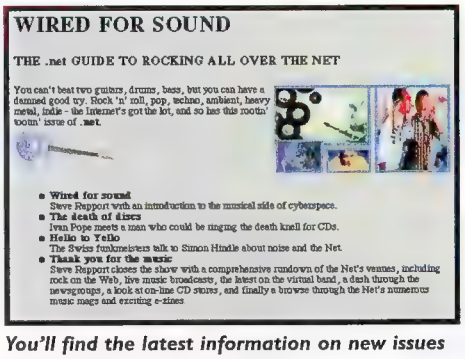
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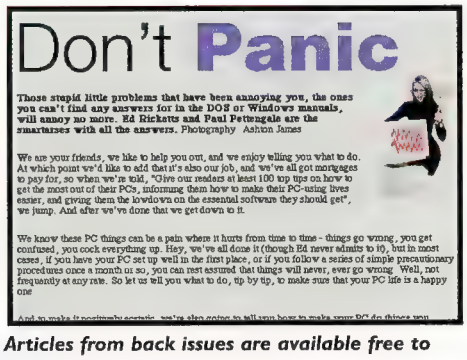

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Introducing 26 packed pages of reviews, covering every sci-fi and fantasy area under the sun. If it's not in the SFX Review Guide, it probably isn't very good...

REVIEWS

From Tank Girl to Pratchett, from Bugs to Preacher, we tell it like it is every month

That "highly innovative" rating system in full

Everything reviewed in SFX gets a mark using the oldest system in the book. Yes, that's right – the old A+, A, A-, B+ thing familiar from school reports the world over. Working out what the scores mean should be obvious, but for those of you who never got above an "F" in your studies, here's a brief breakdown...

- **A+** More or less perfect; almost impossible to find fault with, etc. Oh yes, and possessing that extra something that's guaranteed to make it a classic in the years to come.
- **A** Exceptionally good, almost fault-free, but perhaps lacking that special something that would give it A+ status.
- **A-** Very good, although flawed in some minor way.
- **B+** Very good, but with more significant flaws.
- **B** Good, pure and simple.
- **B-** Good, but with significant flaws.
- **C+** Average. Worth a look if you're a fan of this sort of thing.
- **C** Watchable, readable or the equivalent, but little more.
- **C-** Poor, but with redeeming features.
- **D+** Pretty poor, but not dire.
- **D** Very poor.
- **D-** Worthless.

We do (occasionally) have other marks too, ranging from E+ right the way down to F–. These are just comedy marks, and are only applied to shit so laughably bad it's untrue.

FILM Reviews — **PAGE 66**
The long-awaited cult comic movie *Tank Girl*, Wolfgang Petersen's *Outbreak*, the new Stephen King industrial laundry shocker *The Mangler*, and Jean-Claude Van Damme in *Street Fighter*. Plus The Month in Film, including Coming Soon and the SF Movie Box Office Charts.

TV Reviews — **PAGE 70**
Sky TV's *RoboCop: The Series*, new Gerry Anderson thriller *Space Precinct*, *The X-Files* and the BBC's *"Avengers* for the '90s," *Bugs*. Plus, of course, The Month in TV.

VIDEO Reviews — **PAGE 74**
A packed video section kicks off with *The X-Files*, Honor Blackman episodes of *The Avengers*, and *The New Adventures of Superman* on sell-through, plus reviews of new movies to rent, including *The Shadow* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Plus *Red Dwarf*, laserdisc titles, The Month in Video, and loads more.

BOOK Reviews — **PAGE 82**
Clive Barker's latest, *Everville*, Terry Pratchett's *Soul Music*, plus new novels from Greg Egan and Gwyneth Jones, *The Making of Tank Girl*, and The Month in Books.

COMIC Reviews — **PAGE 88**
Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles*, plus *Preacher*, *Bob the Galactic Bum*, *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor*, and more.

NEW MEDIA Reviews — **PAGE 90**
Bioforge, the first "real" interactive movie, on the PC, plus the beautiful Moebius-designed *Panza Dragoon* and more.

MODEL Reviews — **PAGE 92**
Hothouse's humongous six-foot long USS Enterprise reviewed, plus The Month in Toys & Models.

TOSH Reviews — **PAGE 94**
Or, if you prefer, "everything else." This month, Patrick Stewart reads poems on Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*...

"It's hard to make the link between Lori Petty and the rock hard chick we get to see in the cartoon sections sprinkled throughout the film. Clearly, they're *not* the same person."

TANK

She snogs kangaroos, drives a ruddy great tank – and now she's a film star

Studio: **CIC**
Director: **Rachel Talalay**
Starring: **Lori Petty, Malcolm McDowell, Ice-T**
Cert: **18**
Release: **16 June**

Text: **Matt Bielby, Dave Golder**

It's a weird film, *Tank Girl*. And it's going to get some weird reactions. Some of you will like it, I'm sure, but I'm also certain that a lot of people will loathe it – including, reportedly, Tank Girl's original creator, Jamie Hewlett. That's why we're running two reviews this issue, the first by me, Matt Bielby, and the second by Dave Golder. Hopefully, this'll help you decide whether this very-difficult-to-pigeon-hole movie is your cup of Spunk beer or not...

Okay then, my review. I'm meant to be writing this from the point of view of a long-time *Tank Girl* fan, and, indeed, I've been following the character since the first issue of *Deadline*. I even knew who Jamie Hewlett was *before* that – I'd liked his fanzine, *Atom Tan*, and his spot illustrations in *Commodore User*, and eventually commissioned him to do some covers for computer mags like *Your Sinclair* and *Amiga Power* around 1990 (one unused piece of artwork developed into a series of record sleeves for indie band *The Senseless Things*).

The thing is, knowing about *Tank Girl* is pretty irrelevant when it comes to the movie, because, despite much involvement from Jamie and the *Deadline* crew – and bits of Hewlett artwork popping up every ten minutes or so – there's really very little to connect *Tank Girl* the comic character with *Tank Girl* the movie. The comic book version is ballsier, harder and nastier. She also comes completely unencumbered by plot. (True, *Tank Girl* the film has little plot, but the comic really does have *none*.) And, however great the design work, it's hard to make the link between Lori Petty and the rock hard chick we get to see in the cartoon sections sprinkled throughout the film. Clearly, they're *not* the same person.

Malcolm McDowell broods as Kesslee, ultra-evil boss of the DWP.

Don't get me wrong, though. This doesn't mean *Tank Girl* is a bad film or that Petty does a bad job. In fact, her daffy, *Loony-Toons*-on-acid performance is very appealing – and ultimately the film wins you over, despite whatever fears you might have about it being hopelessly bad during

GIRL

Most tanks come with little metal seats and drab olive paintwork. Not *Tank Girl's* – her vehicle has a huge, comfy chair and flashy paint-job!

the first hour. (And you *will* think this – at times the film seems almost perversely determined to be shit, but constantly rescues itself at the last moment.) I think it was during the bonkers Busby Berkeley dance number that I decided to just relax and enjoy it for what it is, and from there on in had a pretty good time. This isn't my idea of Tank Girl, but as part kick-ass *Mad Max* adventure, part crazed Alex Cox weirdness, and part kooky Julian Temple musical comedy it can't fail to be fun.

So, despite everyone's best efforts, *Tank Girl* isn't much like the comic book, but it *does* capture the don't-give-a-fuck spirit of the original. There are some disappointments – no 'roo shagging, for example, and Petty never gets her kit off (the comic character would have, then shot your face off for staring), but from where I'm sitting it's no disaster. And the 'roos are terrific. **MB**

Well, I've got to admit it – *Tank Girl* is a whole lot better than I was expecting. Reports of last minute re-editing and a dismal first week box office in the US suggested that this was going to stink like a mutant kangaroo's crotch. But it isn't *that* bad. Sure, there's the odd stale lagery whiff of desperation about it in places, but overall it comes up smelling of roses, albeit thorny, greenfly-ravaged ones.

Set in a post-apocalyptic world in which the rain never falls and water is power, this is a quirky, fast-paced kaleidoscope of weird and occasionally downright perverse images. Lori Petty is the wise-cracking heroine with a pet tank – she barely speaks in anything other than snappy one-liners, thus capturing the comic book feel perfectly. McDowell is the villainous head of DWP (the Department of Water and Power), a man who

This dance routine is one of the real highlights of the movie.

Lori Petty: spunky, but not much like the comic book original.

wants to control every drop of H_2O in the desert (and probably the world). Walking barefoot on glass to show what a hard man he is, and draining people of their bodily fluids to quench his thirst, McDowell appears to be enjoying himself a lot more than he did in *Star Trek: Generations.* The rest of the cast make little more than cameo appearances, but at least they're spirited throughout. Even the Rippers – genetically engineered mutant kangaroos – are convincing, although that's more to do with the actors than the special effects. Ice-T with a tail and whiskers may sound naff, but he works.

Of course, you shouldn't expect a plot. It's virtually non-existent – a series of set-pieces incoherently linked by comic strip-style animated sequences. Fortunately, there's a delicious streak of black humour, and the sheer driving energy of the direction makes things eminently watchable. What the film lacks in storyline it more than makes up for in momentum. But while the action sequences are handled superbly, *Tank Girl* has its quiet moments too, including a bizarre song and dance routine. When I use the word "quiet" its only relatively, of course – even here, no opportunity is missed for a bizarre image or a snappy bit of dialogue.

The film has its problems, of course. More plot would have been welcome – and while all the incidental delights are entertaining enough, as a whole it's largely a cold, uninvolving experience. Even much of the wackiness seems self-conscious and calculated. The cartoon sequences, for instance, are a good idea but irritatingly overused.

At the end of the day, it's hard to know quite what to make of *Tank Girl.* Some purists will hate it, I'm sure. But then so will plenty of ordinary punters. Me? I've never read the comic and I quite liked it. It's not perfect, sure, but there's more than enough here to convince me the film's worth parting with a few quid to see. **DG**

THE MANGLER

Studio: **Guild Film Distributors**
Director: **Tobe Hooper**
Starring: **Robert Englund, Ted Levine**
Cert: **18**
Release: **Late May**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

Before we go any further there's something you must understand: I used to have nightmares about being crushed in heavy machinery as a kid, so any film about people getting ground up by large mechanical monstrosities is going to scare me more than it might, say, you. Just so's you know.

There's another thing to make clear from the start – *The Mangler* is not a great movie. It has no stars to speak of, drags badly in the middle, and seems determined to make little sense. The hero's a whinging, unlikeable git too. Happily, though, it *is* a hoot – a fun date movie if you're more into grabbing hold of your loved one during the icky bits than actually following the film. It's certainly something that'll find a natural home on the video

And all this to press a few sheets! It's gruesome industrial accidents a-go-go in *The Mangler.*

shelves in the months to come. It's pretty similar in that way to other Stephen King-based movies (this one's taken from a 1972 short story), in fact.

In a slightly spooky New England town, a crazed industrial laundry owner (Robert Englund) operates a Victorian-style sweathouse, at the centre of which is a gigantic industrial mangle – a 40 foot long, steam-billowing, piston-clanking monster, about twice the size anything built for the purposes of folding sheets needs to be. Needless to say, people start getting caught in the thing (cue gruesome effects in that so-horrid-it's-funny way familiar from *Braindead et al),* our surly cop hero gets called in (Ted Levine), and things soon get *really* complicated, with conspiracies, pacts with demons and (gosh) possessed machinery all making an appearance.

So far, so good. Unfortunately, a dull central section, an increasingly convoluted plot and a rapid bumping up of the supernatural elements all conspire to detract from the biggest thing the film's got going for it – the horrific thought of having a limb caught in a piece of heavy machinery. *The Mangler's* at its best when characters back hopelessly into the mad mangle's maw, or idly tap their fingers inches from potential amputation, but these moments come all too rarely. For director Tobe Hooper, still trying to live up to his *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), this is only the first signs of a return to form. As a sub-*Poltergeist* on-the-edge-of-your-seat night out it does the job – but only just.

OUTBREAK

Studio: **Warner Bros.**
Director: **Wolfgang Petersen**
Starring: **Dustin Hoffman, Morgan Freeman, Rene Russo, Donald Sutherland**
Cert: **15**
Release: **Now showing**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

It didn't sound very appealing: a medical thriller starring Dustin Hoffman and Morgan Freeman, with lots of dull shots of people standing around in plastic yellow suits looking serious. It sounded, well, boring. I'd heard it was quite long too. On balance, I wanted to go and see *Tank Girl* instead.

Of course, I was wrong. *Outbreak* isn't dull at all, but a pacey, efficient thriller, which takes the real – but difficult-to-visualise – threat of a deadly new disease cropping up in a decent-sized population centre, and runs with it. It's like the first half of Stephen King's *The Stand,* or the opening episode of '70s minor fantasy TV classic *The Survivors,* but played completely straight. More than once Hoffman's military doctor, trying to track down the source of the virus – it starts in Africa, but is swiftly brought to a small American town by a smuggled pet monkey – reminded me of Richard Dreyfuss' now classic performance as the UFO obsessed Roy Neary in *Close Encounters,* and you don't get much better than that.

Like *Encounters, Outbreak* is big, expensive film – a serious subject given the full Hollywood treatment. It's not such a complete film, perhaps – it grows more Tinseltown as it goes on, with the climactic helicopter chase pure *Capricorn One* – but it's excellent entertainment nonetheless. The first hour, in particular, is brilliant – with the horrific nature of the disease (death follows within days of infection) explained quickly and clearly, and the military/medical reactions to it followed in detail. Later on, the movie turns into a more obvious conspiracy thriller, with Donald Sutherland's general character – keener to bomb the infected town than find a cure – finally stepping over the line from military hardliner to gibbering loony, but up until that point it's very chilling indeed.

There are more treats too. It's fun seeing Hoffman as a military officer, forced to take part part in action man heroics, and as with the rest of the cast he turns in a top performance. The real star, however, is undoubtedly director Wolfgang *(Das Boot, In the Line of Fire)* Petersen, who once again proves what a class act he is. It's hard to think of many other directors, Spielberg aside, who could tell such a big story as quickly, clearly, and with as much style. Not a great film, perhaps, but certainly a very good one.

A

Rene Russo as Dustin's ex-missus.

"Good general" Freeman (left) and "bad general" Sutherland – Hoffman's bosses and moral opposites.

Hoffman and co work to find a cure for the deadly new disease they've uncovered in the more powerful, less action-packed first half of the film.

STREET FIGHTER

Studio: **Columbia TriStar**
Director: **Steven E de Souza**
Starring: **Jean-Claude Van Damme, Raul Julia, Kylie Minogue**
Cert: **12**
Release: **Now showing**

Text: **Dave Golder**

***Street Fighter* is touchingly dedicated to the memory of Raul Julia. But, God, what an epitaph. He'll be spinning in his grave – probably fast enough to bore through solid granite. The sad fact of the matter is, *Street Fighter* is a monumentally dire movie that fails to make the grade on any level.**

Based on the highly-successful Capcom video game beat-'em-up *Street Fighter 2, Street Fighter* the film plonks its 16 muscle-bound, high-kicking martial artists in the middle of a warzone, where renegade warlord General Bison, eye-poppingly played by Julia, has a vision – a vision of a military-run Utopian state called Bisonopolis (Utopian in the sense that everybody will live in peace and harmony as long as they do what Bison says). The first step in Bison's plan is to storm into Shadaloo City, kidnap 63 relief workers and demand a $20 billion ransom...

Cue Van Damme and Minogue as Colonel Guile and his assistant Cammy, who, together with their crack team of soldiers, are sent in by the Allied Nations to give Bison a good seeing to. Mix in a trio of revenge-seeking journos, a couple of inept arms dealers, some mad scientists and an embarrassed-looking Simon Callow as an AN official and the result is too many characters (using the word in its loosest sense) running aimlessly around in a plot so thin it makes Kate Moss look bloated.

If you've ever seen the TV version of the first *RoboCop* film – you know, the one that's 30 minutes shorter than the original and has all the blood and bad language taken out – you'll get an idea of what it's like watching *Street Fighter.* It looks like somebody's chopped it senseless. Virtually random shots have been cut together ultra-rapidly like machine gun fire, meaning it's loud, it's fast – few scenes go by without a scrap, shoot-out or explosion – but it hardly hangs together at all. The dialogue is a series of feeble one-liners, and the acting ranges from the honest-but-dire to the let's-make-a-fast-buck-and-get-outta-here.

The big shock is that software publisher Capcom ploughed $45 million into the project – it's impossible to see where it went. The special effects are appalling – the man-monster Blanka, for example, looking like The Incredible Hulk in a ginger fright wig. Even the sets look hopelessly artificial.

The real problem, though, is that the film won't even appeal to its core audience – the gamesplayers. The cinematic *Street Fighter* characters are so far removed from their digital counterparts (Dhalsim, for instance, becomes a mere bumbling scientist, with not a stretching limb in sight), and the fight scenes so badly staged, it'll end up just annoying the hell out of fans of the original arcade machines.

So is there anything good about it? Well, there are a few decent jokes, and Kylie looks great – even if her English accent makes you pine for the good old days of Dick Van Dyke. Apart from that, it's streets ahead of all contenders for the title of Worst Film Of The Year So Far.

D

Kylie gets her hands on a bazooka.

Van Damme in worst film yet shocker.

Sadly this is Raul Julia's last role...

Van Damme's best mate gets turned into Blanka, a cross between The Incredible Hulk and Lily Savage.

For a film called *Street Fighter,* there are very few fights. A few streets, though. And loads of posing.

© Rian Hughes

The month in FILM

WHERE WE PROVIDE QUICK UPDATE REVIEWS OF OLD FILMS STILL DOING THE ROUNDS, DATES FOR NEW MOVIES OPENING DURING JUNE AND JULY, AND RUN THIS MONTH'S BOX OFFICE CHARTS.

Still playing

STARGATE

Guild

Director: **Roland Emmerich**
Starring: **Kurt Russell, James Spader, Jaye Davison**
Cert: **PG**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Now this *is* a mystery... Almost unanimously decent reviews and great box office – and all for a film that's, at best, a half-baked hodge-podge of ideas based on everything from Spielberg to *Lawrence of Arabia*. People are obviously so starved of large-scale SF adventure they'll put with *anything*, no matter how crap it is.

What *Stargate* does have going for it is a hokey, but at least promising, first hour. After the obligatory "explorers find a mysterious artefact in the desert" opening scene, we flip to the just as clichéd Mysterious Army Base, where said device is revealed to be a doorway to another world. Here we're also introduced to the principle characters, notably a soft-scientist-who-reveals-a-tough-streak (James Spader), and a hard-soldier-who-discovers-his-human-side (Kurt Russell).

The rest of the movie is pretty much a case of spot-the-rip-off. Through the (*2001*-style) stargate go Spader, Russell and a bunch of (*Aliens*) marines, which transports them to the opposite side of the galaxy, where they discover a (*Star Wars*) desert planet. Here they meet some (*Battle Beyond The Stars*) natives, who worship them (*The Mission*) as gods. Enter an alien who built the pyramids on Earth yonks go. Cue (*Battlestar Galactica*) action and (*Buck Rogers*) "humour."

It's not an inspiring shopping list of ingredients – and ends up a predictable mish-mash of a film. While the effects are okay, most of the actors sleepwalk through their parts, the dialogue is awful, none of the climaxes are exciting, and many scenes are plain laughable. How has *Stargate* got away with it?

D-

Kurt Russell and James Spader confront Ra in the fairly dire *Stargate*.

STAR TREK GENERATIONS

Paramount

Director: **David Carson**
Starring: **Patrick Stewart, William Shatner, Malcolm McDowell**
Cert: **PG**
Text: **Dave Golder**

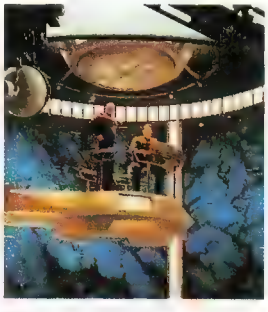
And so, finally, Captains Kirk and Picard (bald-and-ashamed-of-it and bald-but-proud-of-it) meet – but not before valiantly struggling though a plot filled with more holes than a slice of Swiss cheese at the end of a Quentin Tarantino movie.

There's much to enjoy about *Star Trek: Generations* – some amazing special effects shots (the Enterprise crash-landing is but one of many standouts), vastly improved sets (for the first time the Enterprise-D actually looks and feels real), and, of course, That Meeting – but to get the most out of it you're really going to have to shut off the side of your brain that tries to make sense of the thing. Completely.

Although it's fast, action-packed and provides a decent proportion of laughs – Shatner's larger-than-life character is given many of the best lines, and easily holds his own against the undeniably superior, but here strangely muted, Patrick Stewart – the movie as a whole has all the hallmarks of a rushed job, and will disappoint as many as it delights. The other big problem is that the film simply has too many main characters, and in trying to give most of them at least a couple of things to say and do runs the risk of confusing anyone unfamiliar with *The Next Generation* set-up (assuming there are such people, of course). Surely only *real* Trekkers will get any kicks out of things like Data gaining emotions (everyone else will just cringe), while some of the simplistic moralisation of *The Next Generation* series comes across as horrendously twee on the big screen. And Kirk's meaningless death is a travesty, naturally.

Still, at the end of the day – as in all *Trek* – good wins out over bad, and *Generations* can just about be called an enjoyable experience. If only it actually made some kind of sense...

C+



Stellar cartography, a new set built specially for *Generations*.

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE

Warner Bros.

Director: **Neil Jordan**
Starring: **Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, Antonio Banderas, Kirsten Dunst, Stephen Rea**
Cert: **18**
Text: **Dan Goodleff**

Though it sticks in the craw to say it, sometimes the film is better than the book – and, thankfully, that's the case with *Interview with the Vampire*, which takes the eroticism and general moodiness of the novel, then speeds things up so that, while it still couldn't be called fast-moving, events do gain a sense of pace.

Despite Cruise's top billing, this is really Brad Pitt's film. As rich landowner Louis, who, grieving at the loss of his wife and child, falls under the spell of the rakish vampire Lestat (Cruise), Pitt is in almost every scene, and if his saturnine performance is rather one-note, he does provide a moral core around which the flashier performances (the impressive Cruise, and brilliant newcomer Kirsten Dunst, particularly) can dance. The bulk of his story is told in flashback, as Louis – forever at odds with his desires – tells his story to a disbelieving modern-day reporter (Slater): how he became a vampire, how he fell in with Lestat, how together they "fathered" a child (Dunst) and so on.

From New Orleans to Paris, Lestat camps it up, Louis whinges, and much blood is spilled (but despite the gore, there are few jump-out-of-your-seat shocks), all making for a novel take on the vampire theme. It's this, along with the movie's broad sweep through time (from 1791 to the present day) and lush production values, that makes it so compelling to watch – although even the biggest *Interview* fan would admit that things sometimes drag a bit.

Interview is not your typical horror film – it's an intelligent, glorious-looking, romantic arthouse movie, based on a bestseller, that just happens to be packed with big stars. This is a very different kind of vampire movie, but one that taps into exactly what we've found so fascinating about them all along.

B+

Coming soon

In The Mouth Of Madness — **16 June**
John Carpenter directs Sam Neil as the horror author who gets his inspiration from an unusual source. Mr Benn with teeth.

Congo — **30 June**
It's a rumble in the jungle as super-intelligent gorillas go on the rampage. Frank *Arachnophobia* Marshall directs.

Batman Forever — **14 July**
A new Batman – Val Kilmer. A new director – Joel Schumacher. New villains – Tommy Lee Jones as Two Face and Jim Carrey as The Riddler. It's looking good.

Judge Dredd — **21 July**
The biggest comic strip star the UK has ever produced (bar Dennis the Menace, perhaps) makes it to the big screen in the guise of Sylvester Stallone.
Watch out for Hammerstein!

Casper — **28 July**
The friendly ghost of the '40s gets the '90s treatment, both in terms of special effects and attitude. Christina (Wednesday) Ricci co-stars with the special effects.

SF Movie Box Office

The *Stargate* Mystery Continues

No surprises this month, with the exceptions of the continuing inexplicable success of ***Stargate***, and the sudden appearances of ***Gamera*** and Keanu Reeves starrer ***Johnny Mnemonic***, both of which make it on their Japanese box office performances alone.

The cyberpunk thriller *Mnemonic* was released in Japan four weeks earlier than in the US (it's released in the States on 26 May; in the UK in the Autumn) and should therefore do much better in the chart next issue.

Nice to see ***Tank Girl*** managing to make it to mid-table too, despite a fairly disastrous box office showing Stateside.

The SFX Exclusive Worldwide Top Ten SF Films

1 **Outbreak** (US) Warner Bros.
2 **Stargate** (US) Guild
3 **Candyman 2** (US) Gramercy
4 **Star Trek: Generations** (US) Paramount
5 **Tank Girl** (US) MGM/UA
6 **The Mask** (US) New Line
7 **Streetfighter** (US) Columbia Tri-Star
8 **Gamera** (Japan) Toho/Daiei
9 **Johnny Mnemonic** (US) 20th Century Fox
10 **Mary Shelley's Frankenstein** (US) Columbia Tri-Star

"While you might miss Weller *et al* in the lead roles, you can't complain about the look of the show – production values are something the series most definitely has on its side."

ROBOCOP

If what you're after's an all-action satire, look no further...

Production company: **Sky Vision**
Starring: **Richard Eden, Yvette Nipar**
Showing: **Sky One. Wednesdays, 8pm**

Text: **Jon Abbott**

The *RoboCop* films suffered badly from the law of diminishing returns. The first was the perfect blend of far-from-mindless violence and black humour; the second had its moments, but lacked a decent plot; the third... Well, the only significant thing about *RoboCop 3* was that it came with a chillingly mainstream 15 rating. Could this be a hint of things to come, we wondered? Were we due for a totally sanitised TV version?

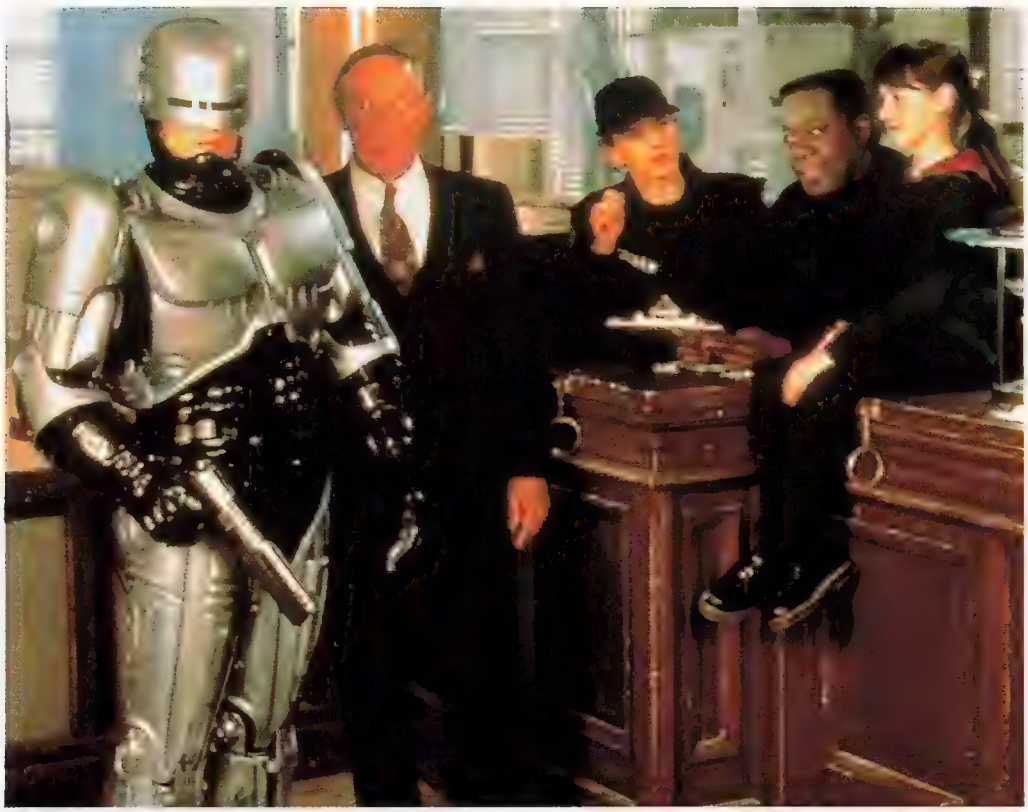
Well, yes, we were. It's happened and now it's here – an almost bloodless, made-for-TV *RoboCop* series, and one where he's got his memory back and a kid sidekick to boot. It sounds poor, maybe even dreadful, but *RoboCop* has one final surprise up his titanium alloy sleeve – it's actually rather good. Of course, a number of obvious changes have been made to bring the movie to the small screen – the biggest being a massive reduction in the level of violence. To hold the gore factor to an acceptable level, RoboCop now has to follow his three prime directives – serve the public trust; protect the innocent; uphold the law – more closely than ever. The most obvious upshot of this is that the TV incarnation of "Future of Law Enforcement" is a lot more *creative* in how he apprehends his suspects – utilising techniques that are interesting to watch, yet devoid of all that brain-splattering action. In fact, these elaborate set-piece arrests make for some of the series' real highlights.

Richard Eden takes over the role of officer Murphy, aka RoboCop.

Yvette *21 Jump Street* Nipar plays RoboCop's partner Lisa Madigan.

And just like his movie predecessor, TV's Robo spends a great deal of time brooding about the hand fate has dealt him. While this provides necessary depth to the character, it's to the show's credit that such ponderings are never allowed to slow things down too much. In fact, the pace is so up tempo you can rarely look away from the screen without missing something.

Of course, the lack of hardcore violence isn't the only change – there's a whole new crop of



The *RoboCop* TV family – the near-friendless Murphy of the films gains a big supporting cast for the TV show: some good and some potentially evil, including Sarah Campbell as Gadget (far right), an annoyingly precocious kid.

THE SERIES

actors too. Replacing Peter Weller (and Robert John Burke, from *RoboCop 3)* in the metal suit is TV newcomer Richard Eden, while co-starring in the Nancy Allen role as Robo's partner is Yvette *21 Jump Street* Nipar's Detective Lisa Madigan.

Other series regulars include Blu Mankuma as Sergeant Stan Parks, Robo's boss and the last barrier between Murphy and the OCP bureaucrats in charge of Chicago's law enforcement franchise, and Sarah Campbell as the irritating Gadget, a little girl adopted by Parks. The obligatory OCP management representative (get ready to boo) is played by David Gardner, while somehow surviving his toxic goo experience in the first movie is James Kidnie as the vengeful villain William "Pudface" Morgan. Ed Fahely is Charlie Lippincott, Robo's "mechanic," and there's even a holographic character (flavour of the month in US SF, it seems), a computer-generated secretary played by Andrea Roth. Meanwhile, Jennifer Griffin and Peter Costigan play Murphy's wife and son, still unaware that good old "dad" is now a cyborg.

Stacked up against them in the pilot episode are Cliff De Young as the body-snatching, brain-stealing Doctor Cray Z Mallardo (Warner Bros. cartoon fans please note) and John Rubinstein (the harassed yuppie lawyer in *Crazy Like A Fox)* as his equally evil assistant. Both overact mercilessly by the way – De Young doing a delightfully demented Bruce Dern impersonation. Later episodes treat us to baddies made up chiefly of crazed versions of present day eccentrics and weirdos – standouts include a very familiar husband-and-wife team of TV evangelists, and a diet-pill called No-Gain that has the unfortunate side-effect of turning its users into Blue Sunshine-style psychotics.

"Stay out of trouble!" Community policing, RoboCop-style.

While you might miss Weller *et al* in the lead roles, you can't complain about the look of the show – production values are something the series most definitely has on its side. In fact, visually, the pilot looks as good as the movies, and the series looks as good as the pilot. Encouragingly, writers Michael Miner and Ed Neumeier are the same guys who scripted the first *RoboCop* movie, while director Paul Lynch is well known for his work on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. With this calibre of creativity behind the scenes it's not surprising that the series demonstrates a wicked sense of humour and some inspired work. This is a team determined to do more than simply knock out a TV rip-off.

Perhaps even more impressive is the fact that, just like the movies, *RoboCop: The Series* is littered with *The Day Today*-style visual gags satirising TV and consumer culture – in particular, the parodies of bland infotainment-style news gain an even greater ironic status than usual in the so-close-it's-painful environment of Sky One. Sometimes it's hard to tell the fakes – a TV ad for a viewer-funded orphanage that's all *Play School* on the surface and 20th century Dickensian squalor on the inside – from the genuine wham-bang Sky fare. These future-shock glimpses are the wisest, most pleasing of all the carry-overs from the movies, and without them *RoboCop* would be just another brainless kung-fu-killer-robots kids show.

The fact is, anyone dismissing *RoboCop: The Series* as "just a kids' show" is missing out on a better-than-average slice of action-orientated science fiction TV. *The X-Files* may be more serious, sophisticated fun, but *RoboCop: The Series* is a surprisingly intelligent hoot. It certainly stimulates more braincells than the average episode of *The A-Team...*

B-

THE X-FILES

THE SECOND SEASON

Production Company: **20th Century Fox Television**
Starring: **Gillian Anderson, David Duchovny**
Showing: **Sky One, Monday, 8pm**
(To be shown on BBC2 in the Autumn.)

Text: **Jon Abbott**

Despite a poor start, the second season of *The X-Files* turned out to be as extraordinary as the first. In "Little Green Men," the mystery annoyingly took a backseat to the Mulder and Scully relationship – and the show clearly suffered as a result.

Some fans might like it, but if the writers start focussing on the two protagonists instead of their investigations, it risks losing what makes *The X-Files* such compulsive viewing. Fortunately, the old magic was there in two subtle bits of business that managed to delineate the relationship without shoving it down our throats – Scully's undisguised relief at seeing Mulder in the FBI building when he doesn't see her, and her reaction when she finds an amorous message on his answerphone. And things really got back to form the second week with "The Host," a monster show with one of writer Morgan's actor relatives in the rubber suit.

"Blood," the next instalment, boasted a splendid central performance by William Sanderson (Larry in the *Newhart* sitcom) as a postal worker who snaps and starts blazing away at all and sundry. It begun as though it might develop into a fascinating study of what's become a genuine phenomenon in the US, but gradually turned into a paranoid fantasy worthy of Mulder's Lone Gunman buddies. "Sleepless" tackled another fascinating premise – sleep deprivation – but soon slipped back into yet another of the series' many "tortured psycho" yarns.

It's almost unfair to review the series' next few episodes because they were written in haste to deal with Anderson's pregnancy. But by the time

Suffering from insomnia? "Sleepless" won't make a very good bedtime story, then. Nightmares ahoy.

Mulder was running into the hospital in a tizzy, I was praying for events to move on from the soapy theatrics made necessary by the Scully abduction storyline, culminating in "One Breath."

So it was good to see all the FBI conspiracy nonsense dispensed with in "Firewalker," which was effectively "Ice" revisited – and just as brilliant, but a new lifeform that this series needs to discover quick isn't one that's parasitic... The next couple of episodes, unseen at press-time, feature a loony religious cult and a ghost committing sexual assaults *à la The Entity.*

With the actual "X-Files" re-opened after the first six episodes, and Anderson's absence dealt with, we can now, at last, hope strange phenomena will again take centre stage. Only then can we enjoy Mulder and Scully's relationship at its subtle and understated best.

B

SPACE PRECINCT

Production company: **Mentorn Films**
Producer: **Gerry Anderson**
Starring: **Simone Bendix, Ted Shackleford, Rob Youngblood**
Showing: **Sky One, Saturdays, 7pm (broadcast by the BBC in the Autumn)**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

Originally entitled *Space Police*, the pilot of *Space Precinct* was a highlight of the last British Worldcon – yes, *that* one, way back in 1987. Okay, so it's been a long time coming – but has it been worth the wait? Well, the first thing to point out is that this is nothing like the ancient pilot. In fact, the only thing that's stayed intact in *Space Precinct* is the basic premise – New York cops patrolling an alien planet sometime in the far future. Shane Rimmer has been replaced by Ted Shackleford (*Dallas'* Gary Ewing) as Lieutenant Brogan, and is now assisted by Rob Youngblood as cocky young Jack Haldane and Simone Bendix as Jane Castle. The rest of the staff is made up of Narns and Kreons, actors in animatronic head masks.

Ted Shackleford (seated), Simone Bendix and the "cocky" Rob Youngblood at work in *Space Precinct*.

Things don't start off well. The first episode, "Protect And Survive," is awful. Brogan and Haldane are assigned to protect a murder witness who turns out to be a disgusting – but friendly – fat, slimy blue thing. Meanwhile, Castle worries over her fever-struck Tarn partner Tookie (Mary Woodvine), and Officers Fredo and Orrin use police robot Slomo to cheat at a VR game. The biggest problem is that there's no SF angle to the story beyond the surface dressing. It might as well be set in New York as in outer space. Other bad points include Brogan running down a corridor which is clearly the same few yards of set shot several times, and Burt Kwouk playing a police informant who "no grasp basic sentence construction."

Happily, later episodes improve considerably, and even start using – gasp! – science fictional ideas. "The Snake" is a take-off of the 1974 disaster movie *Juggernaut,* in which Brogan and Haldane attempt to defuse bombs wired to airlocks on board a giant space-freighter. It's tense too: should they remove the trigger or the power source? And I challenge you not to shout "Cut the blue wire!" while they make their minds up. "Time To Kill," in which a deadly cyborg bumps off the main characters one by one, starting with Tookie, is even better. This is very well handled, and reminiscent of my favourite ever Gerry Anderson episode, *Captain Scarlet's* "Cloudbase Attacked."

Space Precinct makes no bones about using other people's ideas – time-travelling cyborgs, aliens with acid for blood, etc. – but weaves them all together with typical Anderson panache. The model work is, as you'd expect, excellent, and there are lots of explosions. Brogan's family adds a personal slant to the stories, and there's a nice love-hate relationship between Haldane and Castle. Whichever way you look at it, though, the robot's crap.

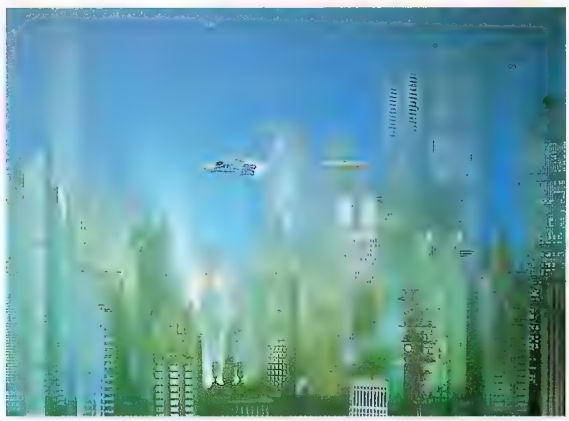
Sure, it's hokum – it doesn't have the social relevance of *Alien Nation* or the bureaucratic realism of *Star Cops,* for example – but it's still fun, exciting and full of potential.

B

Jerome Willis plays popular alien Captain Podly...

...in one of many, many rubber suits.

Look familiar? It's not hard to see where the inspiration for this particular alien came from...



The effects in *Space Precinct* are numerous and impressive, although there's often a touch of the "Gerry Andersons" about them.

BUGS

Production company: **Carnival Films**
Starring: **Craig McLachlan, Jaye Griffiths, Jesse Birdsall**
Series consultant: **Brian Clemens**
Showing: **BBC1, Saturdays, 8.05pm**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

At least you can't say the BBC doesn't try. After several years when virtually the only SF outside the children's department was the increasingly desperate *Red Dwarf,* Auntie Beeb has at last attempted to create something original. The thing is, does it work?

With Brian Clemens' input as series consultant, *Bugs* couldn't avoid being pigeon-holed as an *"Avengers* for the '90s" – he was, you remember, one of the powers behind that seminal show – but it's a comparison that does *Bugs* no favours. *The Avengers* became a cult over the course of several series, after all, so you can't expect *Bugs* to click like that did straight away. And anyway, attempts to "manufacture" cults are invariably doomed to failure (like *Virtual Murder* or *The Glam Metal Detectives).*

Anonymous dockland locations, big bangs... Yes, it must be *Bugs*.

The basic premise, a trio of independent specialists being called in to investigate high-tech crime, is both different(ish) and topical. McLachlan, Griffiths and Birdsall – putting their roles in *Neighbours, The Bill* and *Eldorado* well behind them – are all very good. The main problem seems to be that it's all just a bit too, well, bland. The five writers (including Stephen Gallagher, who also contributed to ITV's patchy *Chiller)* have deliberately avoided any reference to specific British locations or ideas – the idea being that the show can then be dubbed and sold anywhere in the world (though you'd think the number plates would be a dead giveaway, wouldn't you?). The problem with this is that it takes out what made *The Avengers* such a huge, international hit in the first place – the fact it was so very British (it was one of few British shows ever networked on prime-time in the US). Stripping a show of its national identity is self-defeating, particularly when the nation in question is as eccentric as ours.

Admittedly, *Bugs* can be quite exciting in an undemanding sort of a way, and fortunately enough doesn't take itself too seriously (although there are – thankfully – no sly glances to camera to really ruin things). With a second season already being planned, there is a possibility that with further character development and some more surprising scripts, this could develop into quite a good series. Just give it time.

C

Ex-soap actors Jesse Birdsall, Jaye Griffiths and Craig McLachlan, all after their big break in *Bugs*.

The month in TV

More recent genre (and genre-related) TV from the past month, including Yorkshire TV's Chiller series, plus Coming Soon and a special SFX terrestrial/satellite TV chart.

Chiller

Yorkshire TV

Writers: **Stephen Gallagher, Glenn Chandler and Anthony Horowitz**
Starring: **Serena Gordon, Nigel Havers and others...**
Showing: **ITV, Thursdays, 9pm (first broadcast Thursday 2 March)**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Back in the good old days, television was full of scary, adult drama which made no compromises to "family" viewing. From the Nigel Kneale serials of the '50s through to Brian Clemens' excellent *Thriller* and the *Hammer House of Horror* and *Mystery & Suspense*, TV companies weren't afraid to produce intelligent and often disturbing programmes – and hang the consequences. Full marks to YTV, then, for attempting to remind people of what things were like with *Chiller* – a weekly series comprising five "modern terror stories."

With writers like novelist Gallagher and *Taggart*-scripter Chandler, and actors of such calibre as Nigel Havers and Peter Egan, things boded well for YTV's endeavour – and, most of the time, *Chiller* lived up to expectations, even though it lacked the balls of something like *Hammer House of Horror*.

That said, opinion in the SFX office is split on whether the series was actually any good or not. I personally found all five dramas to be suitably creepy – the scariest being "Toby," which had Serena Gordon suffer a (literal) phantom pregnancy. Effects were subtle and all the spookier for it.

Completely unsuitable for children, and therefore well worth watching when repeated.

B-

Ken Russell explains all, thus guaranteeing a new generation of bonkers film-makers...

I Camcorder

Grant Naylor Productions

Starring: **Robert Llewellyn**
Showing: **Channel 4, Wednesdays, evening**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

***Red Dwarf* fans will need no extra encouragement to watch this latest production, in which the Kryten actor gives tips on making home videos more interesting. Among the professionals adding their two-penny worth are Ken Russell and special effects dude turned director Bob *(Proteus)* Keen. Keen's episode, where he demonstrates horror make-up techniques using household materials, is particularly interesting.**

Llewellyn is a friendly, enthusiastic and watchable presenter, so this six-part series will hopefully inspire camcorder enthusiasts nationwide to turn their hand at making proper movies (even if they invariably do turn out dross at first). It's worth watching even if you don't have a camcorder too.

B+

Johnny And The Dead

Melvyn Bragg Productions

Director: **Gerald Fox**
Starring: **Brian Blessed, George Baker, Jane Lapotaire**
Showing: **ITV, Tuesdays, 4.40pm (first broadcast Tuesday 4 April)**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

This is the first live-action TV adaptation of a Terry Pratchett novel, although excerpts from both the book and the first Johnny Maxwell story were included in a "for schools" programme last year. It's nicely made too, with Brian Blessed standing out as, well, Brian Blessed. Terry's collaboration on the script keeps it true to the original novel too.

The problem is that much of the charm of Pratchett's work lies in his use of language and witty narrative. There's nothing wrong with his dialogue, or with the direction and performances, in this short series, but to those of us who know Pratchett's style it inevitably seems to have something missing – Terry.

Still, a nice effort, and it bodes well for the upcoming *Discworld* adaptations – see Strange Tales, starting on page 6, for more details on that. (By the way, Pratchett is currently working on a third Johnny Maxwell novel – we'll have more details soon.)

B-

Jane Lapotaire plays a dead person in *Johnny and the Dead*. Looks well on it, doesn't she?

Little Johnny Maxwell (right) meets the deceased Alderman in front of the old guy's tomb. "But I'm not a ghost," he insists. Yeah, right.

Coming soon

Babylon 5
Tuesdays, 6pm, Channel 4
The vastly improved second series reveals more clues about creator MJ Straczynski's five-year plan.

Blake's 7
Saturday 3 June, 6.05pm, UK Gold
Watch the entire cast get slaughtered in the final episode.

Doctor Who
Various times, UK Gold
"The Sea Devils," "The Mutants," "The Time Monster," "The Three Doctors" and "Carnival of Monsters," shown episodically on weekdays (around midnight), and in omnibus form on Sundays at 9.20am.

Highlander
Thursdays, 8pm, Sky One
Duncan McCloud proves there can be more than only one (three, in fact, if you include Quentin McCloud from the cartoon series).

Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy
Thursdays, 8.20pm, UK Gold
Don't Panic! The Earth is destroyed to make way for a bypass. Again.

Moonbase 3
Sundays, 7am, UK Gold from **18 June.** Early '70s UK stab at serious SF. Ultimately, a bit dull.

Quantum Leap
Weekdays, 10pm, Sky One
Daily repeats of the quasi-religious, time-travelling series.

Star Cops
Saturdays, 7am, UK Gold from **24 June.** Slow, cheap-looking and po-faced, this mid-'80s BBC effort still has some effective moments.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Sundays, 3pm and 9pm, Sky One
Season three continues. Forget to set the vid for "Fascination."

Tales From The Crypt
Saturdays, 10pm, Sky One
More quirky than scary.

The X-Files Season One
Saturdays, 8pm, Sky One
Or "The X-Files Re-opened" as Sky One euphemistically calls it.

The X-Files Season Two
Tuesdays, 8pm, Sky One
Things get spookier for the duo.

SF TV Top Ten

Prime movers

It's not what you are, but where you are that's the secret of success in the TV charts. Which means we get the so-so ***Bugs*** and disappointing ***Chiller*** taking up the top two positions thanks to their prime time slots, while superior series like ***Star Trek*** and ***Babylon 5*** struggle to maintain a middle position. Both *Bugs* and *Chiller*, however, saw falling ratings after their first episodes, so things could change drastically next month.

The SFXclusive UK Top Ten TV Programmes

1 **Bugs** BBC1
2 **Chiller** ITV
3 **The New Adventures of Superman** BBC 1
4 **Star Trek: The Next Generation** BBC 2
5 **Babylon 5** Channel 4
6 **The Champions** BBC 2
7 **Captain Scarlet** BBC 2
8 **seaQuest DSV** ITV
9 **Knight Rider** ITV
10 **The X-Files** Sky One

"The tales twist and turn so that just when you think you know what's coming, you're thrown satisfyingly off track... Shame the plot construction is so laughably shoddy though."

THE X-FILES

Find out what the fuss is about with this timely video release of the first series

Distributor: **Fox Video**
Starring: **David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson**
Cert: **15**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£10.99 each**

Volume 1 Pilot, Deep Throat 8

Volume 2 Conduit, Squeeze 8

Text: **Stuart Campbell**

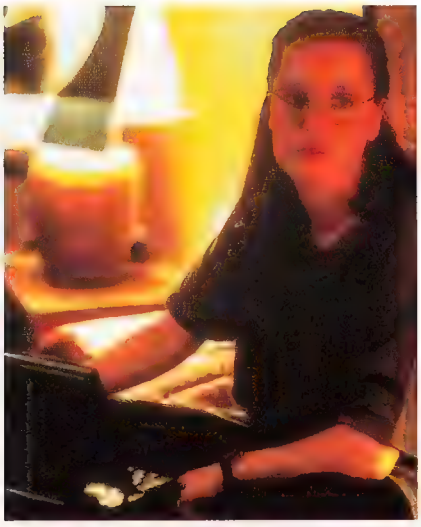
Some friends of mine have a cat called Spooky. They got him from a cat rescue centre, and for the first three months he wouldn't come out from his box in the cupboard under the stairs. If you were lucky and you peered in with a torch, you could sometimes just make out a single shining eye staring back at you from the inky blackness. Even today, although he'll tentatively come out and allow himself to be made a fuss of, the slightest sudden movement will send him bolting straight back under the stairs.

The reason I mention this isn't just for a bit of colourful background, or because it's more interesting than any of *The X-Files'* basic plotlines, but because sometimes, even in the face of fairly solid evidence (disappearing Whiskas, miaowing sounds, cat poo in the hallway), people openly doubted whether he existed at all, and that's the situation Spooky's namesake, FBI Agent "Spooky" Mulder, finds himself in in *The X-Files*.

Scully (Gillian Anderson) and Mulder (David Duchovny) strike a pose in one of the many mysterious woods the show seems to throw up.

The FBI has dumped Mulder in a dingy basement office so he can harmlessly pursue his obsession with the eponymous X-Files: FBI files on strange happenings which can't be explained by conventional scientific theory. Accompanying him is Agent Dana Scully, a hard-faced-but-cute college girl who goes to bed with all her make-up on, takes showers at the first sign of impending crucial plot revelations and has the kind of big, round eyes that are absolutely ideal for looking incredulous and stupid with.

Mulder (catchphrase: "Then *you* explain it to me") drags Scully around for most of the duration of these four episodes, gradually dispelling her hard-bitten FBI cynicism with irrefutable, sometimes first-hand evidence of flying saucers, ETs and strange creatures who can dislocate their limbs at will, only to have the two-dimensionally dim Scully forget it all ten minutes later and revert to "But surely there's a rational explanation for this seven-armed purple corpse in my bathroom?" – seemingly to emphasise her role as a bit of gratuitous sexual chemistry for the sincere-yet-dreamily-hunky Fox. (Interestingly, the pilot show shows Scully as a more fresh-faced kind of gal, but by the first proper episode she's had a power hairdo



Guys never make passes to agents in glasses. Gillian Anderson doesn't adopt this look often, thank God.

LOIS AND CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

Distributor: **Warner Home Video**
Starring: **Dean Cain, Teri Hatcher**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£10.99 each**

Vol 1: Strange Visitor, Neverending Battle B

Vol 2: I'm Looking Through You, Requiem For A Superhero C

Vol 3: I've Got A Crush On You, Smart Kids C

Text: **Gary Whitta**

A huge success Stateside, Warner Bros. Television's revival of the world's most famous superhero is currently in its second season, but now UK fans can catch up on Kal-El's early escapades with these six episodes from season one. Strangely enough, though, there's no sign of the original pilot episode, so the show's interpretation of Superman's origins will remain a mystery for those who didn't previously catch it on BBC 1. Purists will also notice that the show's full title has been restored (the BBC inexplicably drops the *Lois and Clark* part for UK transmission).

The really interesting thing about *Lois and Clark* is how strongly it focuses on the relationship between *The Daily Planet's* two star reporters. Now while novel twists on old tales are always welcome, for me at least this muddles the whole thing's priorities somewhat. Are we really supposed to believe that the goings-on in the Planet newsroom are more exciting than the Man of Steel's efforts to save Metropolis from disaster?

The show's creator Deborah Joy Levine certainly seems to think so, and as a result what we get from a typical episode is more often a simple mystery thriller than a wham-bam superhero actioner. Admittedly, recent episodes have redressed the balance, but in these early shows a glimpse of Superman himself is a rare occurrence. In "I've Got A Crush On You" (in which the two go undercover at a nightclub to expose gangland corruption), for example, he appears just twice.

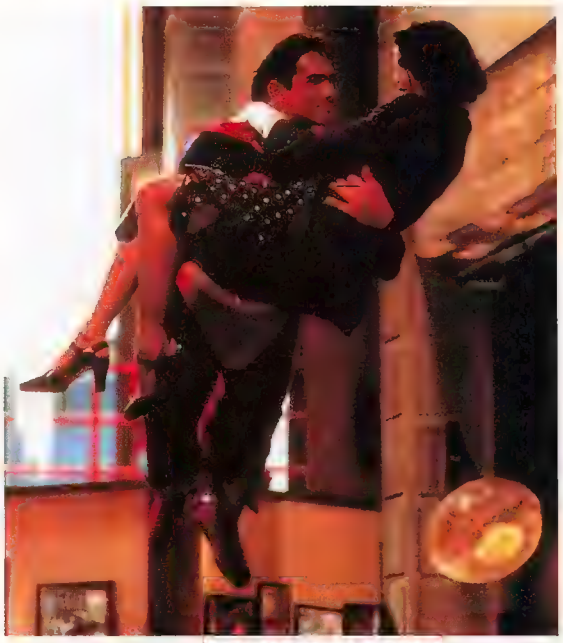
What makes the show's pro-Clark, anti-Superman bias especially frustrating is that the superhero segments are often the most fun bits to watch. Clark's clever uses of his super-powers makes for some great comic moments (redecorating his apartment in three seconds flat, for instance), as well as more straightforward thrills – in one particularly well-orchestrated scene, Superman demonstrates his strength and speed by firing a gun at Lex Luthor, and then racing ahead of the bullet to catch it a millisecond before it kills him. It's all good stuff, and you find yourself wanting more of it than the series ever gives you.

The show's handling of characters is equally erratic. No-one is going to complain about the delicious Teri Hatcher as Lois – she's as arrogant and nosy as the Planet's legendary newshound should be – but Clark? No doubt in an effort to extend the show's appeal we're given Dean Cain – sufficiently handsome as Superman, but if anything even more so as Clark Kent. Not even the dorky glasses can disguise the fact that this guy is a tanned beefcake and babe magnet. The "new" Clark Kent couldn't be further removed from Christopher Reeve's more accurate bumbling incarnation. Call me old-fashioned, but I kind of preferred him the way he was.

The biggest disappointment, however, is Lex Luthor (John Shea), re-invented here as a suave, respectable multi-billionaire businessman loved by the people of Metropolis as a caring benefactor. Under the surface, of course, he's a steaming cauldron of evil, but not in the maniacal over-the-top fashion that has always made for the best comic-book villains. Gene Hackman's Luthor planned to blow the entire state of California into the ocean, simply to raise the value of his own real estate. Now *that's* nasty...

Bizarrely, then, it's the supporting characters who are often the most appealing – Lane Smith is terrific as an Elvis-obsessed Perry White, and Tracey Scoggins as the *Planet's* sexy man-eater of a gossip columnist is fun too. It's their interaction, together with great Hatcher-Cain chemistry, that makes the show what it is.

Unfortunately, what it is *isn't* exciting weekly superhero exploits, so much as a professional and polished, snappily-written comedy/drama with a sci-fi slant. I fear, however, that there's just not enough here for real Superman fans to get their teeth into. And perhaps the most telling criticism is that none of the episodes really bear up to repeated viewing. They're enjoyable enough ("Strange Visitor" being the best; "I'm Looking Through You" the worst), but hardly the stuff great video collections are made of...



The trouble with *Lois and Clark* is that Dean Cain is just too good looking to make a convincing Kent. As Supes, of course, he's perfect.

The woman with the perma-perfect bob – Teri Hatcher.

Dean Cain is Superman is Clark Kent. How come nobody ever notices?

Dark clothes, bad weather, anonymous buildings – *The X-Files* looks moody, but rarely spectacular.

THE MANY FACES OF FRANKENSTEIN

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein
Distributor: **Columbia Tristar Home Video**
Cert: **15**
Director: **Kenneth Branagh**
Starring: **Kenneth Branagh, Helena Bonham Carter, Robert De Niro**
Release: **24 May (rental)**

Frankenstein
Distributor: **Video Gems**
Cert: **15**
Director: **Tom More**
Starring: **Robert Powell, Carrie Fisher, John Gielgud**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£10.99**

Frankenstein Created Woman
Distributor: **Lumiere**
Cert: **15**
Director: **Terence Fisher**
Starring: **Peter Cushing, Susan Denberg**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£10.99**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

***Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* was being lambasted by critics even before the cameras started rolling – clearly many felt an antipathy towards *wunderkind* Branagh that was only slightly offset by the fact nobody dared openly criticise Robert De Niro. Mistakenly, critics complained that Branagh was attempting to heretically remake a classic, which he clearly wasn't. The works of Karloff, Cushing and others are good movies, true enough, but only loosely based on Mary Shelley's book. The Branagh version, however, is the most faithful adaptation to date.**

It all added up to a bit of an uphill battle for young Ken, and, if truth be told, he rises to the challenge pretty well. Certainly, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* stands up well against last year's other big monster movies, the sometimes fun, sometimes laughable *Wolf*, and the curiously characterless *Interview With The Vampire*. The important point here is that this film is not strictly a horror flick; it is, like the novel on which it's based, a gothic romance. Bonham Carter's Elizabeth is made into a far more important character than in any other version, and her relationship with Branagh's Victor as vital to the plot as that with De Niro's monster.

Her final scene is the biggest departure from Shelley, but it's in keeping with the author's style, and either a genuinely disturbing piece of cinematic horror or a complete hoot depending on what mood you're in. Whatever your reaction, it's more than enough to make up for the undeniable slow pace of much of what's come before.

As an adaptation of *Frankenstein* the novel, the film succeeds admirably. But since many viewers won't be interested in what inspired it, that may not be enough to satisfy. And, ironically, many literature fans who appreciate Mary Shelley are liable to shy away from this kind of Hollywood monster movie anyway. Cleft sticks are therefore much in evidence. The best thing to do is put all previous versions out of your mind, and just accept this as a rollicking good yarn, full of passion, violence and electric eels.

Ten years before Branagh, Yorkshire TV made a *Frankenstein* tele-film which was unexpectedly released a few weeks ago. This is one of the lesser known versions – and surprisingly not bad. It was (again) slammed by the critics, but, hey, show me a *Frankenstein* movie that wasn't. One-time Jesus of Nazareth, Robert Powell, plays the blasphemous Victor Frankenstein (these days, Jasper Carrot's sidekick...), Carrie Fisher (fresh from *Return of the Jedi*) his fiancée, David Warner the fire-damaged monster and John Gielgud the old blind man. Treating the story as a classic drama rather than a horror flick, this slightly shuffles the events of Shelley's tale, but keeps the characters and their motivations intact. Performances, costumes and sets are all good, with the mercurial Frankenstein a truly pitiable creature. The biggest drawback is the dodgy quality of the film itself.

Meanwhile, Lumiere's Hammer library brings us possibly the oddest of Peter Cushing's six outings as the Baron. *Frankenstein Created Woman* has very little to do with traditional *Frankenstein* ideas, but is instead a revenge movie with a pseudo-religious set-up. Former *Playboy* Playmate Susan Denberg is Christina Kleve, a sweet redhead with a club-foot and nasty facial scars. She and her lover Hans (Robert Morris) are teased by three local rakes (including *Yes, Minister's* Derek Fowlds), who later murder her father and frame Hans for the crime. Hans is executed and the devastated Christina commits suicide.

The ever-dependable Baron F has been experimenting with the transference and capture of souls, and, aided by the doddery Dr Hertz (Thorley Walters, who would play the police inspector in the next film), transfers Hans' soul into Christina's "repaired" corpse. Don't expect to see the actual creation sequence, as depicted on the video sleeve, though, because time and budget over-ran here apparently, so the scenes never made it to the final cut. Nor is there any adequate explanation of why Christina's hair changes from red to blonde during the transformation, beyond Cushing's odd comment: "As I predicted!"

The second half of the film sees Christina/Hans luring and killing the three rakes, not unlike Christopher Lee in 1969's *Taste The Blood Of Dracula*. Unfortunately, the story soon slips into psychological slasher mode and there's no attempt to investigate the after-effects of Frankenstein's experiment. All Cushing has to do is escape from the predictable village rent-an-angry-mob and fail to prevent a third murder.

None of Hammer's Frankenmovies are bad, and Cushing is wonderfully cold and dispassionate in this one, but this is still no classic. Don't expect in-depth characterisation or a sensible story and you won't be disappointed.

Distributor: **Warner Home Video**
Cert: **PG**
Directors: **Richard Compton, plus Jim Johnston** (Vol 1), **Bruce Seth Green** (Vol 2) **and Janet Greek** (Vol 3)
Starring: **Claudia Christian, Jerry Doyle, Mira Furlan, Michael O'Hare**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£10.99 each**

Volume 1: Infection/Soul Hunter

Volume 2: Midnight On The Firing Line/ Born To The Purple

Volume 3: Believers/And The Sky Full Of Stars

Text: **Maff Evans**

Garibaldi (Jerry Doyle), the hard-nut (but follically challenged) security chief from *Babylon 5* in decidedly dodgy space suit affair.

***Babylon 5*, for those of you who don't know it, is a vast spacestation built after a bitter war between the Earth forces and the (technologically superior) Minbari. Designed as a waystation and meeting place for all lifeforms, it's packed with ambassadors from all the major space-faring races – a sort of interstellar United Nations – with each culture striving to score political points off its neighbours, while the Earth forces who run it do their level best to keep the peace.**

Babylon 5 (the series) was conceived around the same time as *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, but, despite the surface similarities – chiefly that both are set on big, futuristic spacestations – *Babylon 5* is an altogether different show. It's darker, dirtier and purer SF than the space opera-like *DS9*. The two big standouts are its state-of-the-art computer-generated special effects, and the fact that its creator, J Michael Straczynski, claims to have worked out the entire plotline before the show had even been aired, with tantalising details revealed every few episodes. On the downside, the main characters seem less likeable, less easy-to-get-into, than those in *DS9*.

These are the early episodes, before the show really got into its stride. The first, "Infection," has its roots very much in '70s SF. Archaeologist and technological researcher Dr Vance Hendricks

ANIME ACTION!

THE MANGA INVASION CONTINUES...

***Legend of the 4 Kings*: Fairly hopeless old tosh, if the truth be told.**

New Dominion: Tank Police (12) **£5.99**

Angel Cop 1 (18) **£5.99**

Macross Plus Part 2 (PG) **£9.99**

The Legend of the 4 Kings Chapters 7 & 8 (12) **£13.99**

Distributor: **Manga UK**
Text: **Andy Stout**

***Dominion: Tank Police Act 6*: Those sexy Cat sisters just get better and better.**

Somehow the collection of bad jokes, indifferent animation and plots presumably scrawled down on the back of beermats that is *New Dominion: Tank Police* continues. How is a bit of a mystery – although it might have something to do with the scanty costumes of the Cat sisters.

The plot is simple: an old friend of Leona's is killed in dodgy circumstances, and she resigns from the Tank

BABYLON 5

(David McCallum) brings aboard Babylon 5 his latest discovery – living, organic technology. Unfortunately, his assistant gets taken over by one of the samples, and becomes a walking defence robot (*Doctor Who* and *Space:1999* infestation plots have probably started ringing very loud bells at this point). The action scenes, where the robot is chased through the station, are promising, and the gung-ho *Alien*-esque zap-bang-crash element enjoyable enough, but the plot eventually flounders amid clumsy Third Reich analogies and misplaced, unconvincing psychobabble.

The following episode doesn't even bother with the action. A damaged alien ship is rescued and its pilot discovered to be a "soul hunter" – a being which can sense death and sets about capturing the released soul. Nice idea, but the suspense is rather pointlessly teased out to breaking point, and the soul hunter as a character isn't fleshed out enough to be a terrifying presence.

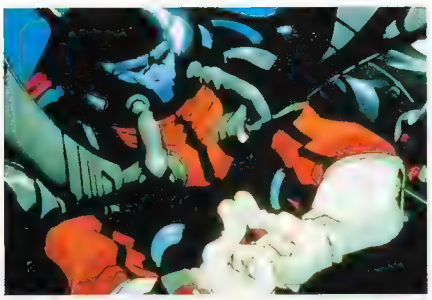
Another plot lacking in the required tension is "Midnight On the Firing Line." A Naarn raid on an unarmed Centari station causes friction on Babylon 5 and poses some tricky questions for the ambassadors. Unfortunately, the political intrigue is shallow and dull, to the point where you don't really care who's at fault in the end. The second episode on volume two continues the Naarn/Centari discussions, but merely as a side-plot to a story of misplaced affection. An attempt to expand on characters? Perhaps, but it's still weak material.

"Believers" deals with Dr Franklin's choice between saving an alien child's life or respecting the beliefs of his parents' religion. Even with the seemingly tacked-on graphic dogfight scenes, this is more like a spacebound episode of *Casualty* than anything. Fortunately, the ending provides an interesting enough twist to carry things off.

"And The Sky Full Of Stars"combines political intrigue and secrets from the past of up-until-now two-dimensional Commander Sinclair. As in the pilot episode, events are hinted at rather than explained, only detailing characters to a small degree, but it does sow enough of a seed for interesting plot developments in the future.

They're a frustrating experience, these early *Babylon 5s*. Even though the series has the benefit of SF veteran Harlan Ellison's input, and a few genuinely promising stories, the final package ends up decidedly unfulfilling. Flat characters and situations lacking in tension make it more akin to expensive Gerry Anderson than classy *TNG, DS9* or *The X-Files* fare. Happily, it gets a lot better later on – the chief purpose of these tapes being to give you a good grounding for the intrigue to come.

Londo Mollary (Peter Jurasik), one of the alien ambassadors aboard Babylon 5. Nice haircut, mate.



***Macross*: Spectacular action scenes (not quite worthy of *Akira*, but close) make for top late-night viewing.**

Police to find the killer. The police still keep an eye on her, though, and the baddie is brought to book with enough sub-text left over to fuel later episodes.

Tank Police is a kid's cartoon really, the Japanese equivalent of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* with added sexual innuendo. Occasionally, there are bursts of decent humour, as in Captain Brenten's acknowledged *Dirty Harry* rip-off, but they're too few and far between to keep you enthralled. Mildly entertaining.

Much more like it is the gritty and realistic *Angel Cop 1,* which starts off with a Porsche 911 launching a mortar attack at the American Embassy. Terrorism is the theme of this six-parter, which follows the struggle between the judge, jury and executioner of the Special Security Force and the extremist left-wing organisation Red May. Angel is the non-nonsense newest member of the SSF – "a hard bitch" in the words of one of her fellow agents.

Macross Plus Part 2 opens with a stunning sequence set at a gig given by the computer-generated pop star Sharon Apple. Of all the Manga releases this month, *Macross Plus* boasts the most spectacular animation, mixing stock cyberspace imagery with some real flights of the surreal.

Unfortunately, our review copy hadn't been dubbed into English yet, so it was a bit difficult to work out what was going on. Judging from the box notes, though, it involves a jealous scrap between a couple of fighter pilots for the affections of Apple's disenchanted producer, coupled with a fair amount of computer hacking. A quality soundtrack too.

None of these compliments, however, can be applied to *The Legend of the 4 Kings, Chapters 7 & 8,* an everyday story of four brothers with incredible special powers living in a Tokyo suburb, who are pursued by two rival corporations, one of which wishes to dissect one of the boys to find out what gives the young men such astonishing powers...

The whole affair is as uninspiring as it sounds, and the writers seem to have been paid by the cliché. Incredibly daft dialogue, silly fight scenes, world domination plans, corporate machinations, sub-*RoboCop* cyborgs and a mad German scientist all combine to make this completely and utterly forgettable. Avoid.

THE AVENGERS

Distributor: **Lumiere**
Cert: **PG**
Directors: **Jonathan Alwyn, Peter Hammond, Richmond Harding**
Starring: **Patrick McNee, Honor Blackman**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£11.99 each**

Volume 1: Death Despatch/Propellant 23 C

Volume 2: Mr Teddy Bear/Bullseye B

Text: **Dave Golder**

We thought it worth giving a brief, but honourable (no pun intended), mention to the first Honor Blackman *Avengers* episodes to be released on video. These are from the black and white days, long before mad professors, cybernauts and other SF elements were introduced to the show. Even kinky leather outfits were a rarity.

Still, despite the lack of any genuine SF interest, it's nice to see the series in its embryonic form – recorded live, on video, almost exclusively in the studio, with the incidental music played just out of shot so that Blackman could choreograph her fight scenes perfectly.

Although Diana Rigg is probably the best-remembered *Avengers femme fatale,* these vids clearly show that if Blackman, as Cathy Gale, had stuck around for the colour, filmed episodes she would have been just as popular. Cool, sassy and oozing only-just-TV-friendly sexiness, she cast the mould for action women in the '60s. Meanwhile, Patrick McNee, who was already comfortable with the role of the impossibly suave Steed, keeps the innuendoes coming thick and fast.

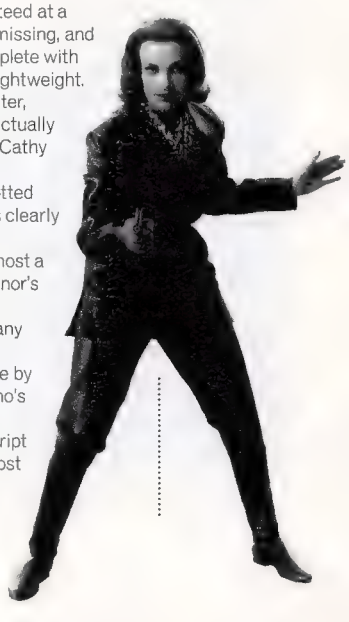
"Death Despatch" takes Steed and Gale around the world, courtesy of stock footage, chasing after the killers of an international courier who strangely wasn't carrying anything of much importance. Or was he? Some great interaction between the two leads livens up the rather banal plot.

Another courier dies in "Propellant 23," just before he passes his package to Steed at a French airport. The package goes missing, and the ensuing plot is pure farce, complete with comedy policemen. Amusing but lightweight.

The second tape is much better, kicking off with "Mr Teddy Bear" (actually the first broadcast episode to star Cathy Gale), which features a toy-loving assassin. A quirky, intelligently-plotted episode, it's more bizarre elements clearly point to better things to come.

Even better is "Bullseye," almost a Cathy Gale showcase, in which Honor's character becomes the leading shareholder in a small arms company with dodgy dealings. The board members are being bumped off one by one and the duo has to suss out who's responsible. A tense, intriguing whodunnit-style episode, with a script that's a lot more intelligent than most of today's predictable cop series.

All in all, a bit of a treat.



Who's that girl? Why, it's Honor Blackman, of course. Little did she know at the time that the future held *The Upper Hand*...

Rian Hughes

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Format: **Laserdisc (PAL, two discs, CAV format)**
Release date: **Out now**
Text: **Steve Jarratt**

Regarded by many as one of the best fantasy movies ever made, and almost certainly the finest example of Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion art, *Jason And The Argonauts* at last makes a welcome appearance on PAL laserdisc, courtesy of Birmingham-based Encore Entertainment. This 2,000-copy limited edition includes, alongside a faithfully restored version of the film itself, 1,500 black and white production stills, the complete script, re-release trailer, pictures from a Harryhausen retrospective at the MOMI in London, plus a 30-minute interview with the animator himself. All good stuff, although I'd have preferred less of the production shots for more close-ups of the models or behind-the-scenes info on Harryhausen at work.

The classic Sunday afternoon movie, *Jason And The Argonauts* is a stirring tale of ancient derring-do, based on tales from Greek mythology (hence the men in skirts). Jason and his crew of hardy champions set sail for the island of Colcis, with the intention of capturing (read stealing) the legendary golden fleece, incurring the wrath of demons and gods *en route*.

The movie is a *tour de force* of special effects – and most of them hold up surprisingly well against today's digital excesses. Indeed, given the merely workmanlike performances and direction, *Jason And The Argonauts* is only rescued from B-movie status by its latex and metal co-stars, who are often more animated than their flesh and blood counterparts. Todd Armstrong as Jason is consistently out-heroed by his Brit cohorts, for instance, and Nancy Kovack's soporific Medea is too obviously on board as romantic-interest eye-candy.

Memorable scenes include the defeat of the giant bronze statue, Talos, and the climactic sequence in which Argonauts and reanimated skeletons mix it up. And while Harryhausen's Dynamation system may be showing its age, the fact that these creatures are the work of deft fingers rather than raw computing power endows *Jason And The Argonauts* with a lovable bygone-age quality.

And the film looks even better on laserdisc than it does on TV too – Encore went through four prints before finding one of high enough quality, and has removed all the scratches, enhanced night sequences and cleaned up glitches in the soundtrack. The only real disappointment in an otherwise fine box-set is the accompanying booklet, which is small and flimsy.

As a piece of cinematic entertainment, this is a watchable – if flawed and slightly crinkly – romp that's aged well.

***Jason and the Argonauts* is packed with top effects scenes. Okay, so they look cheesy when compared to *Jurassic Park*, but they're still *very* entertaining to watch. Talos (top right) is particularly impressive.**

Mothra is, as the above makes abundantly clear, a giant butterfly thing. Scary, huh?

GODZILLA VS MOTHRA

Manga Live

Cert: **PG**
Director: **Takao Okawara and Koichi Kawakita**
Price: **£13.99**
Text: **Andy Stout**

Whatever era you look at – Godzilla has been going for decades – you're virtually guaranteed a kitsch monster classic of some sort or other. This is a recent addition to the series, made back in 1992, but it's as gloriously dumb as ever, featuring the trademark unrealistic models, and even more unrealistic dialogue.

As a bonus we don't just get Godzilla and Mothra, but an additional monster, Battra, too, all running around a wafer-thin plot that blends the traditional themes of large-scale destruction and pseudo-environmentalism with as many scenes lifted from Indiana Jones movies as it thinks it can get away with. Ideal late night viewing.

THE HIGH CRUSADE

Medusa Pictures

Cert: **15**
Directors: **Holger Neuhauser & Klaus Knoesel**
Starring: **Rick Overton, Patrick Brymer, John Rhys-Davies**
Release date: **Late May**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Remember that 90-second sequence in Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, where the hapless Brian, on the run from Roman guards, falls into a passing alien spaceship, piloted by bug ugly Gilliam-esque aliens? Well, *The High Crusade* is basically this sequence spun tenuously out from 90 seconds to 90 minutes...

The plot goes something like this: dumb English knights are asked to join the Crusades, and while everyone's busy packing, the scout ship for a potential alien invasion arrives, lands – and promptly gets its butt kicked. The English pile aboard, demanding to be taken to the Holy Land, but end up getting whisked into space instead. Cue much medieval-knights-versus-aliens shenanigans.

The problem is, this isn't a concept you can really spin out to an hour and a half – certainly not with a medium-to-small budget, and certainly not with this sort of patchy script. The odd international nature of the film doesn't help either (Italians playing Glaswegian aliens? Erm, yes). The result is a right old mish-mash.

Most of the Pythonesque jokes (comic medieval filth, racial stereotyping, and anachronistic swearing) have been written with other languages in mind too. And it's all so overplayed. There's not a genuine bellylaugh to be had.

The movie does have its plus points, of course. The special effects are okay, much of it is handsomely mounted, and there are some game performances, notably from the 3' 10" Debbie Lee Carrington (who played Thumbelina, the smallest of the mutant prostitutes, in *Total Recall)* as a miniature Scots alien. But the fact remains: the most impressive thing about *The High Crusade* is the fact Medusa had the balls to make it at all.

Oh dear, oh dear. It's a brave attempt, but Monty Python, tiny Scottish aliens and a German sense of humour do not a good film make.

Ray Liotta (left) and Kevin Dillon wonder why beardy egomaniac Stuart Wilson got the job as villain. He is, not to put too fine a point on it, shit.

No Escape

Polygram

Cert: **18**
Directed by: **Martin Campbell**
Starring: **Ray Liotta, Lance Henriksen, Kevin Dillon**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Do you remember the last film you saw that had no women in it? Not one, not even in the background? Well, I can. It's this one. All the more strange, then, that the producer should be a woman – Gale Ann Hurd of *Aliens* fame. She's spent a lot of money on *No Escape* – lots of location footage, plenty of actors, some decent effects – but for such a big production the level of ambition seems horrifyingly low; the potential audience small. This is unashamedly B-movie fare, mixing elements of *Escape From New York* and *Mad Max 2* with every prison movie you ever saw, and all set on a *Jurassic Park*-like island. The set-up is good, the cast, in the main, strong, but the result is hopelessly average.

We're 20 years or so in the future, and Liotta, a disgraced special forces soldier, has been sent to an isolated island prison, where the worst, most dangerous criminals are dumped and left to fight it out among themselves. There he finds people split into two factions – the insiders, led by Henriksen, who are trying to build some sort of civilised community, and the outsiders, a violent pack of ruffians led by Stuart Wilson in an over-the-top performance. (He's obviously been asked to emulate Alan Rickman in *Die Hard* and *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves,* but neither he nor the script are up to it.)

Happily, the rest of the performances are reasonable. Liotta, so good in *GoodFellas,* is given little to go on, but makes a convincingly hard-boiled action man, Hudson and Henriksen acquit themselves well, and a bunch of familiar British TV faces flesh out most of the minor roles nicely.

Where *No Escape* really falls down though is in its lack of memorable action sequences. The settings and primitive weapons are reminiscent of *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves,* but without the rope-swinging or arrow-work. Liotta despatches the bad guys with grim conviction, but it's not enough. *Mad Max's* spectacular car stunts – or something, *anything,* that would provide real excitement – are sorely missing.

C

Red Dwarf Gunmen of the Apocalypse

BBC Home Video

Cert: **15**
Director: **Andy De Emmony**
Starring: **Chris Barrie, Craig Charles, Danny John-Jules**
Release date: **Out now**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Episodes: **Psirens, Legion and Gunmen of the Apocalypse**

The last series of *Red Dwarf,* series six, is said to be one of the worst by *Dwarf*-philes. They reused old jokes, they say, not to mention old plotlines. Well, perhaps, but it's hardly anything to worry about – even at its supposed weakest, *Red Dwarf* is still good enough to knock 95% of sitcoms from either side of the Atlantic into a cocked hat. It did win a BAFTA, after all.

There are three basic things *Dwarf* has going for it. First, the brilliant core cast, with four strong, distinctive characters played by four top actors – more on them in a minute. Second, the reasonable productions values, particularly for a BBC sitcom. We get location shoots and decent sets – plus perfectly acceptable special effects, not quite up there with *The Next Generation's,* but certainly good enough to all but wipe away the memory of the awful shit they used to palm us off with on *Doctor Who* and *Blake's Seven.* Finally, the excellently crafted and joke-packed scripts.

If you remember, the theme from season six was that the boys from the Dwarf had lost the Red Dwarf itself, and were chasing after it in the smaller Starbug, which gets them into predictable amounts of trouble – in "Psirens," they come across a spaceship graveyard and almost fall foul of a bunch of alien brainsuckers; in "Legion," a visit to a spacestation goes horribly wrong; and in "Gunmen of the Apocalypse" an attempt by the android Kryten to combat a system-destroying virus ends up with the entire cast taking part in an OK Coral-type gunfight against the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (!) This is, perhaps, the standout, but all three episodes provide solid entertainment, and more than a few chuckles.

Barrie makes a brilliantly pompous coward as the holographic Rimmer, Charles is suitably sordid as Lister, the only true human of the crew, Llewellyn's Kryten is great, and John-Jules does wonders with his more limited highly-evolved cat character. In addition, season six treats us to *Eastenders'* Anita Dobson, CP Grogan (ex-Altered Images singer) and even Jenny Agutter in incidental roles. Not great *Dwarf,* perhaps, but still great telly.

B+

The boys from the Dwarf in typical pose. From left to right: Robert Llewellyn, Craig Charles, Danny John-Jules and the great Chris Barrie.

The Shadow (Alec Baldwin) gets to grips with a female.

The Shadow

Polygram

Cert: **12**
Director: **Russell Mulcahy**
Starring: **William Baldwin, Tim Curry, John Lone**
Release: **May (rental)**
Text: **Dave Golder**

After a couple of turkeys so big they'd keep Bernard Matthews going well into the next century, director Russell Mulcahy at last returns to the form he showed with *Highlander.* Okay, so that was no work of genius, and neither is *The Shadow,* but at least both films are fun and stylish, mixing mysterious heroes with moody photography and great action set pieces.

Of course, it helps that the film's pulp/comic-strip origins lend themselves so well to the style-over-substance priorities and clever-clever camerawork Mulcahy specialises in. And you have to fill out the thin script and cavernous sets somehow...

It's clear how much this owes to Tim Burton's *Batman* movies too. Alec Baldwin – who looks more like Bruce Wayne than Michael Keaton ever did – stars as the '30s millionaire playboy by day/crimebuster by night, who has the ability to "cloud men's minds" and thus appear invisible. Ish.

The film's biggest weakness is the lousy script, a hotch-potch of clichés and quirky inventiveness which can't help mixing in a sizeable dollop of '60s *Batman* campness with its '90s *Batman film noir.* And once *The Shadow* gets stuck into fighting a magical 2,000 year old Genghis Khan things start to get *really* silly. While Baldwin spends most of the time looking moody and menacing, the rest of the cast just go over the top, notably principal villains Tim Curry and John Lowe.

Still, visually, this is a feast, and one you'll be picking from your mental molars long after you've switched off the VCR – the energy of the direction and quality of the design work in the end winning out over the rickety story.

B-

T-Force

Guild

Cert: **18**
Director: **Richard Pepin**
Starring: **Erin Gray, Evan Laurie, Jack Scalia**
Release: **24 May (rental)**
Text: **Steve Holland**

There ought to be a category for videos like *T-Force* – hokum. Hokum doesn't promise anything but pure switch-off-your-brain entertainment, so you can forget about plot, character development or emotional complexity...

T-Force casts ex-*Dallas* star Jack Scalia as future cop Jack Floyd – a guy who doesn't work by the book, drinks alone in bars, and at some point seems highly likely to throw his badge down on his boss's desk and walk out (sound familiar?). Still, at least Scalia can act the part (just), and comes across as verging on the engagingly not bad. The story opens with a *Die Hard*-esque terrorist infiltration of a 21st century office block in which a British ambassador is held hostage in exchange for various criminal colleagues.

The mayor therefore sends in the Terminal Force, an elite corps of four androids, to sort out the situation. Oops. They go on the rampage and kill the hostages as well as the terrorists. Three of the four rebels then decide to terminate the mayor (who, wouldn't you know it, is Jack's ex) when he goes into a blue funk and orders them to be shut down. Meanwhile, the fourth robot opts to be Jack's robot-hating partner and pay penance.

Yes, it's cliché-ridden, but in hokum terms it works quite well. The opening terrorist bust motors along nicely; the mid-section, where the robots go renegade, is a good laugh and the ending (quarry time!), suitably engaging. *T-Force* sits happily in the mid-range of hokum SF movies: it won't win an Oscar, but it'll pass 97 minutes without making your brain seize up.

C

Who dropped that banana peel? An "action" scene from *T-Force.*

The month in VIDEO

Dune

Polygram

Cert: **15**
Director: **David Lynch**
Starring: **Francesca Annis, Kyle McLachlan, Sting, Max Von Sydow**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **Dave Golder**

***Dune* is a film of extremes. Some of the special effects are stunning, some are crap; some of the sets are superb, others are shoddy '60s *Star Trek;* some scenes are genuinely awesome; some downright embarrassing. Unfortunately, there's nothing good on hand to balance the ponderous, ham-fisted mess that passes as a script.**

Based on the complex novel by Frank Herbert, it follows the battle for supremacy over the desert planet Arakis between the House Atreides and the House Harkonnen. Arakis, you see, is the one planet on which you can find the spice Melange, which is vital for space travel.

The evil Harkonnens have the advantage that the Emperor is giving them backhanders. The Atreides have the advantage that their Duke's son, Paul, is turning into a God. I know who my money's on.

Despite giving *Dune* a chillingly otherwordly atmosphere (and a few deeply kinky moments), Lynch's idiosyncratic style merely turns an already long, complicated story into a stodgy mess, with pretensions well beyond its budget and source material.

Kyle McClachlan, Patrick Stewart and (in particular) Sting turn in career-worst performances, while luvvie troopers like Francesca Annis, Freddie Jones and Max Von Sydow wander around looking like they want to kill their agents. Worst of all are the sandworms, which still look like living hoover attachments.

Even worse is the fact that the video version isn't in Widescreen. Panning and scanning drains the sets and photography of any substance, and highlights the daft performances horribly. Which is exactly what this film *doesn't* need.

C

Doctor Who: The Androids of Tara

BBC Home Video

Cert: **U**
Director: **Michael Hayes**
Starring: **Tom Baker, Mary Tamm**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£11.99**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Take *The Prisoner of Zenda,* mix in some stock BBC-cheapo SF elements, then add Tom Baker hamming and camping things up, and you've pretty much got "The Androids of Tara."

The Doctor, Romana and K9 visit Tara looking for the fourth part of the Key To Time. Tara's an odd planet, on which the gentry live like 15th century nobles, while the peasants tinker around with electronics, producing lifelike androids and laser-powered swords.

As usual, the TARDIS has turned up at a crucial moment. The local prince is just about to be crowned King, but only if he turns up at the coronation in time – enter Count Grendl, who wants to claim the throne for himself. Androids, as you might

Sting in looks great/can't act "shock." Still, his fight scenes do at least provide some of the few memorable bits of the mish-mash that is *Dune*.

A youngish, pre-*Brookside* Mary Tamm does her best to look scared in "The Androids of Tara."

expect, play a big part in everybody's schemes, and soon split-screen work abounds, as various characters meet their synthetic *doppelgängers.*

After an inexcusably dire first episode, "The Androids of Tara" perks up considerably. The plot moves along at a fair pace, punctuated by some great action set-pieces, like the climactic sword fight between the Doctor and the Count.

Tom Baker is on top form, leaving Peter Jeffrey, superb as the snarling Count, to chew over what's left. The rest of the cast play it all laudably straight too. Meanwhile, the effects are surprisingly effective.

Not classic *Dr Who,* that's for sure – the direction's one step up from *Rent-A-Ghost* and the plot's secondhand – but fun all the same.

B-

Doctor Who: The Stones of Blood

BBC Home Video

Cert: **U**
Director: **Darrol Blake**
Starring: **Tom Baker, Mary Tamm**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£11.99**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Considering that this was the 100th *Doctor Who* story, you'd have thought the BBC could have come up with something a bit, well, more celebratory. Or at least half decent. Anything but this desperate concoction of lame scripting, over-the-top acting and the worst special effects since *Flash Gordon* flew around in a spark-farting spaceship.

The quest for the third segment of the Key to Time leads the Doctor, Romana and K9 to a stone circle in rural '70s Britain. Three of the stones, however, are blood-sucking, silicon-based aliens who are being worshipped by the local druids as the familiars of some goddess or other. Little do they suspect that this goddess is, in fact, a pan-dimensional villain who's been nipping in and out of hyperspace.

Tom Baker's bullfighting antics and Beatrice Leahman as a standard-issue dotty old professor warding off evil druids with her bicycle light rate highly on the "How did they think they could get away with that?" scale. But nothing compares to the lingering shot of possibly the worst model spaceship ever for sheer cringeworthiness.

Okay, so it's easy to pick holes in an 18-year old *Dr Who* story, but, to be frank, "The Stones of Blood" was downright shoddy even in its day. Script, direction and acting all comes across as embarrassingly inept. And the effects? Well, "Wobbly Polystyrene Blocks of Blood" would have been a more apt title...

D+

Reboot

Polygram

Cert: **U**
Starring: **Kathleen Barr, Michael Benyaer, Jesse Boss**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£9.99**
Text: **Dave Golder**

The world's first completely computer-animated kids' cartoon series, *Reboot* follows the adventures of a lively bunch of eccentric characters who live in a city inside a computer.

Bob is the hip, streetwise nero, a blue-faced guardian who talks in Californian teen-speak. It's his job to repair "tears" (glitches) in the system. Unfortunately, there are viruses about, like the monstrous Megabyte, which aim to use these "tears" to infect the entire computer.

Okay, so the concept is hardly original, and the computer in-jokes as predictable as Jo Brand stuffing her face, but the show is fast and inventive. And there's a bewildering array of scatty but charismatic robotic supporting characters. Here you get two 25-minute episodes (the first two broadcast) – to wit, a spaceship shoot-out in "The Tearing" and a bizarre Formula One affair in "Racing The Clock." Stunning effects – but well dodgy scripts.

B

***Reboot* looks great, but needs a better script if it wants to last.**

Coming soon

New video releases to whet your appetites...
(NB. All dates are liable to change without notice)

Megazone 23 III A and B Manga **5 June**
Yes, even more inexplicably be-numeralled anime.

Patlabor Manga **5 June**
Animated police robots patrol cartoon 1999 Tokyo.

Deep Space Nine Volume 3.7 CIC **12 June**
Star Trek spin-off that boldly doesn't go anywhere.

Glen Or Glenda Pickwick **19 June**
Cross-dressing classic with Bela Lugosi as the string-pulling omnipresence.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Volume 3.8 CIC **26 June**
And still they come...

Star Trek: Voyager Volume 1.1 CIC **26 June**
The lovely Captain Janeway assembles her crew.

Taste The Blood Of Dracula Terror Vision **14 July**
New Warner horror label kicks off with top Hammer flick. Ralph Bates and Christopher Lee star.

Westworld Beyond Vision **14 July**
Android Yul Brynner goes haywire in Michael Crichton classic. (For more on Warner's two new labels, see our news pages, Strange Tales, starting on page 6.)

SF Video Charts

The X-Philes

Movies on video release hardly get a look-in this month, as genre TV eats up all the top slots. Storming into the top two places, and joining such sell-through stalwarts as ***Star Trek: The Next Generation, Doctor Who*** and ***Red Dwarf***, is ***The X-Files***, the first tapes of which just recently hit the shops.

Whether *The X-Files* videos will have the same legs as *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek*, though, and sell in big numbers after the first couple of releases, is still unclear. At the moment, the signs are good...

(Last month's chart positions are also shown.)

HMV The HMV SF Video Chart May

1. (New) **The X-Files Box Set** Fox Video
2. (New) **The X-Files (Volume One)** Fox Video
3. (New) **Red Dwarf 6: Byte** BBC Video
4. (1) **The Crow** Entertainment in Video
5. (New) **Doctor Who: The Androids of Tara** BBC Video
6. (New) **Doctor Who: The Stones of Blood** BBC Video
7. (2) **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** CIC
8. (3) **Star Trek: The Next Generation Movie 8** CIC
9. (New) **Angel Cop** Manga
10. (5) **Warlock Armageddon** First Independent

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"Incidental treats include soul-draining, shootings, mutilation, lynching, crucifixions, impalement, incinerations, excrement-flavoured snakes crawling forcibly down throats..."

EVERVILLE

Liverpool's horrormeister returns with this sequel to The Great and Secret Show

Author: **Clive Barker**
Publisher: **HarperCollins (paperback)**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 640pp**
ISBN: **0-00-647225-7**

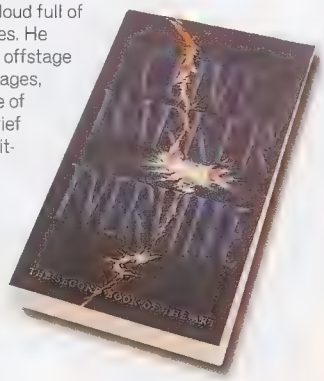
Text: **David Langford**

Clive Barker is a fine, fluent writer, with the power to create memorable – and often memorably nasty – scenes and images. And there are certainly plenty of interesting ingredients in this whopping fantasy-horror epic – perhaps too many, in fact. Although Barker's creative imagination can still boggle us, he's lost something since the days of those razor-edged short stories in the *Books of Blood* or the magical vistas of *Weaveworld*.

Everville begins in 1848, with a grim prelude outlining the founding of Everville, Oregon. After some blood, violence, and chilling reminders of a certain brand of religious intolerance, we skip abruptly to the activities of an almost unworkably large cast in the present day. For a long while, the relevance of the 19th-century prologue is puzzling, but slowly it emerges that four of its characters are still very much in the picture....

Clive Barker doesn't quite re-capture the magic of his earlier work here.

Despite its length, this isn't a stand-alone novel but *The Second Book of the Art* – the first being *The Great and Secret Show*. And it looks suspiciously as if there'll be a third too (if only to reveal what the "Art" actually is). Several characters barely seem part of book two, and make what amounts to mere guest appearances – like the unsociable "Death-Boy," who moves in a dustcloud full of screams and faces. He lurks menacingly offstage for hundreds of pages, walks on a couple of times to play a brief and murderous bit-part, and then vanishes most unsatisfactorily into the shadows.



There are very similar problems with the unspeakable,

unbeatable arch-villain Kissoon and the continent-sized apocalyptic monster called the Iad Uroboros. This latter name is surely a mistake: it's lad with a capital I, but one keeps reading the I as a lower-case L, especially when the "Uroboros" bit is omitted. Hence the story is clouded by double-takes – who *is* this young fellow? – and visions of a stray character from the Legion of Super-Heroes called "Uroboros Lad." But I digress...

Anyway, the lad gets a terrific build-up as the ultimate world-drowning abomination from the dark side of the metacosmic dream-sea Quiddity. Quiddity itself, that luminous place one visits in dreams and otherwise only three times in life (birth, first love and the moment of death), is a fine and original creation. There is a real sense of wonder – and loss as the sea's archipelagos are wrecked by the dark wave of the oncoming lad. And then we have this colossal anticlimax when the lad (or part of it; the plotting is a trifle strained at this point) breaks through the portal to Earth and Everville, shrinks to a far less terrifying scale, fails to be either creative or destructive, and – in company with Kissoon – slips quietly and swiftly out of sight, its eyes clearly on a distant sequel.

Incidental treats include shootings, dismemberment, soul-draining, mutilation, lynching, crucifixions, incinerations, impalement, excrement-flavoured snakes crawling forcibly down throats, and much slaughter – usually of innocent bystanders. These include large numbers of not-quite-human exiles from Quiddity, who once again make Barker's favourite point that the vileness in the human soul is to be feared much more than any malformation of the body. As one character muses: "Demons were simple. They believed in prayer and the potency of holy water. Thus they fled from both. But men; what did men believe?" What, indeed.

The writing is certainly good enough to keep unsqueamish readers turning the pages, but *Everville* would still have benefited from some sharp trimming – of the less relevant storylines and characters and the succession of false, abortive or not-quite-climactic climaxes, to be precise. An example: the psychic investigator Harry D'Amour spends an inordinate amount of time fretting over the significance of a nonsense mantra a certain demon repeats again and again to him during a nasty encounter not actually featured in the book. Suddenly, when *Everville* is nearly over, the demon pops into view for the first time and there's a brief showdown, apparently a final one, in which the significance of the words is still not explained...

There's a certain whiff of soap opera plotting here (resembling the book's described smell of bad magic: "stale incense and week-old sushi"), with characters left over from *The Great and Secret Show* being dragged on stage for no other reason than to get killed off, others appearing more for the sake of continuity than because they're genuine participants in this novel, and great wads of development and *denouement* rather too obviously being held over for a presumed third instalment.

To be fair, Everville's 640 pages do manage to bring a few of its spaghetti-like plot lines satisfyingly together. The strand that starts in 1848 works out effectively, for instance, with some nice ironies in the backfill of revelations. Another tale which runs from start to finish is a thoroughly unpuritanical love story – Barker is too smart to fall for the Hollywood ethic that virtue must be rewarded and vice punished, and the fate of the naughtily adulterous lovers in *Everville* is nicely unconventional. A further character is strangely transfigured by gaining the Art, but what exactly this means we don't find out. It is also good to see the godlike and sadistic observers called the Jai-Wai finally get jolted out of their enjoyment of the unfolding bloody tale and sucked into the plot as vulnerable players. And there are many other such scenes to enjoy...

But still the book has this albatross of unfulfilled story hanging about its neck. And for all Barker's skill and flashes of vision, it ultimately fails to satisfy. No doubt it will sell very well indeed.

C+

SOUL MUSIC

Author: **Terry Pratchett**
Publisher: **Corgi (paperback)**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 378pp**
ISBN: **0-522-14029-5**

Text: **David Langford**

The legendary Discworld suffers from frequent invasions and crazes. When it's not unspeakable horrors (closely resembling Jeremy Beadle) from the Dungeon Dimensions, it's the hellspawn of our own Earth: police procedurals, Hollywood, fundamentalists or – worst of all – shopping malls. This time the invading madness is sex, dwarfs and rock 'n' roll. Well, dwarfs and rock 'n' roll at any rate.

The saga that is Discworld continues with Terry Pratchett's latest effort, ***Soul Music***.

© Rob Scott

Soul Music continues the "Death saga" from *Mort* and *Reaper Man*, with skeletal Death again going off duty and worrying about the Meaning Of It All. The universe needs a stand-in for the truant, probably because of quantum, and Death's schoolgirl granddaughter Susan soon discovers that, although she's related only by adoption, Discworld heredity works in mysterious ways and bone is thicker than water. The scythe is indeed hers: she *is* the Grim Teenager...

Unfortunately, she finds herself fancying the doomed guitarist of the subtly named Band With Rocks In, which has set Discworld twitching and jumping to a new sound that hot-wires the spinal cord: Music With Rocks In! Even the aged wizards of Unseen University are strangely impelled to don blue suede shoes and leather robes (although the crusty Bursar, who's a bit out of date, prefers the flared variety). The Band itself consists of horn-playing Glod the dwarf, Cliff the troll on rocks ("Can't see anyone lasting long in this business with a name like Cliff") and guitarist Imp y Celyn – whose name appears to mean "Bud of the Holly."

Death himself may be taking a holiday with the Klatchian Foreign Legion and the Discworld underclass (including Foul Ole Ron, the beggar whose appalling Smell leads its own independent life), but the Band is in deadly peril from crazed audiences, its own rapacious manager, and the Musicians' Guild, whose hard men know some nasty tricks with a piccolo. Hilarious digressions, one-liners and rock jokes abound: "We're on a mission from Glod." Bit-parts include a computer powered by, yes, bugs, a raven who doesn't do the N-word, and the Tooth Fairy, whose business principles are explained at last.

But as usual with Pratchett, there's a steely underlying toughness about matters of life and Death. Susan's verbal showdown with grandfather Death, for instance, is both funny and touching. Meanwhile, the dancing, electric spirit of the music loves Imp/Buddy, and wants to give him its best gift: to live fast, die young, and be famous forever...

Events build to a climax which requires Death, robed in black leather and with a rose between his teeth, to race madly on something very much like a motorbike towards a final drastic clash of music and silence. Maybe not the best Discworld novel to come from Pratchett's pen, but definitely a good one.

B

LETHE

Author: **Tricia Sullivan**
Publisher: **Victor Gollancz hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 384pp**
ISBN: **0-575-06036-0**

Text: **Rod Lawton**

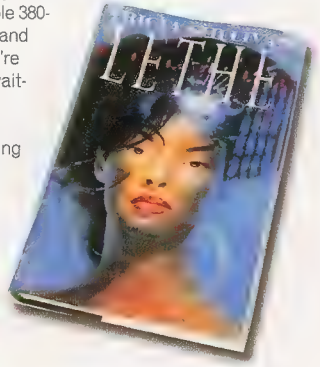
Lethe is the river of forgetfulness, the lesser-known companion of the river Styx in the Hades of Greek legend. And forgetfulness is the basic theme behind this long, escalating adventure yarn – forgetfulness, deceit and the pursuit of power. It's also about wormholes in space, sentient forests and a girl who can breathe underwater and communicate telepathically with dolphins. You get your money's worth.

The book is set in a not-too-distant future, where the world has been devastated by "gene wars," and "pure" humans have to live under permanent shelter. As several new races of near-humans struggle to find mutual equilibrium in a very different world, a gate to another is discovered at the edge of the solar system. To some it's a major new scientific discovery; to others it's the uncovering of an old and terrible secret. It's a secret which all but a few have been helped to "forget" – hence the title.

If you can survive a couple of slightly sugary clichés, and periodic metaphor storms, you'll be okay with this one. In fact, you're going to enjoy quite an intelligent, sensitive and engrossing yarn. While it's not going to keep you on the edge of your seat for the whole 380-odd pages, it does develop pace and suspense, so that by the end you're reading in double-speed, can't-wait-to-see-what-happens mode.

All in all, then, a satisfying read. *Lethe* also leaves you thinking about the characters, the world they live in and what's going to happen in their future – the "ending" also makes for a new and interesting "beginning." You'll be thinking about it long after you've finished reading...

B



THE X-FILES: GOBLINS

Author: **Charles Grant**
Publisher: **HarperCollins paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 277pp**
ISBN: **000-648-204**

Text: **Jim Swallow**

The first novel in a series of literary spin-offs from *The X-Files* TV series, Charles Grant's *Goblins* promises that "The truth is out there. And in here." Big talk for a paperback pretender to the throne, but Goblins has a few things on its side – not least the fact that, unlike most other licensed SF show novels, this first *X-Files* book isn't simply a lack-lustre adaptation of the pilot episode script, but bravely launches straight into original territory. Grant is amply qualified to pull off *The X-Files'* mix of thrills, chills and intrigue too, with his background as a Nebula and World Fantasy award-winning SF and horror writer, and editor of the *Shadows* and *Night Vision* anthologies. So does he deliver?

It's always hard to take the measure of a licensed-property novel. If, like *Goblins*, it's based on a series, should you be expecting a book that reads like an episode? Should it do all the things they could never afford to do on TV? Or should you be treated to an inner view of the characters you normally only get to see the surface of? The best answer, of course, is all three – and Grant pretty much comes through with the goods. Written towards the end of the first season, *Goblins* is crewed with the characters set firmly in their grooves – Mulder is recognisably Mulder, Scully is as cynical in the face of overwhelming proof as ever, and Mr X is... Well, you get the point. Unlike many early licensed novels, which suffer from ill-defined and uncharacteristic leads, and have been written by authors who've been given little to work with (the first few *Star Trek: The Next Generation* books are a prime example), *Goblins* already has the framework all in place, so the story can simply get on with itself.

Dana and Fox: Happily acting just the same in *Goblins* as they do on the telly.

The plot is pure *X-Files* – a murder mystery leading to a top secret military project creating "stealth humans," bolstered with a few sub-plots about an assassination attempt on Mulder's life, and a tag-along pair of mundane FBI agents. The story takes a while to get off the ground, and it's disappointing that the signposts to the bad guys aren't better hidden, but nearer the end the pace picks up, and it all really starts to feel like an episode unreeling inside your head. If some story elements seem a little similar to material seen in season two *X-Files* shows, this is quite coincidental and doesn't detract from the plot.

There are a few nice extra touches too. Grant isn't afraid to plug in a few location gags about his home state of New Jersey – the action takes place around the Fort Dix army base and nearby town of Newton, for instance, and fans who remember it will notice Grant tipping his hat to the Chris Carter episode "The Jersey Devil." There are also a few allusions to the position of *Goblins* in the total *X-Files* scheme of things, made clear by Scully's kidnapping and recovery, the closure and reopening of the X-Files, and the appearance of Mr X, all of which set it firmly after the mid-point of the second season. (If you haven't seen these – see TV reviews, page 71 – you needn't worry, though: there are no major plot spoilers.)

And it's good to hear that there are more *X-Files* books in the pipeline. Grant has two more on the way, *Whirlpool* (out 24 July) and *Hunter* (out 25 September). A further three books are planned for 1996.

B-

TREK SPECS

The Star Trek: The Next Generation Companion

A-

Author: **Larry Nemecek**
Publisher: **Simon & Shuster paperback**
Price/page count: **£12.99, 340pp**
ISBN: **0-671-88340-2**

Captain's Log Supplemental II

D-

Author: **Mark A Altman & Edward Gross**
Publisher: **Boxtree paperback**
Price/page count: **£9.99, 128pp**
ISBN: **0-7522-0938-8**

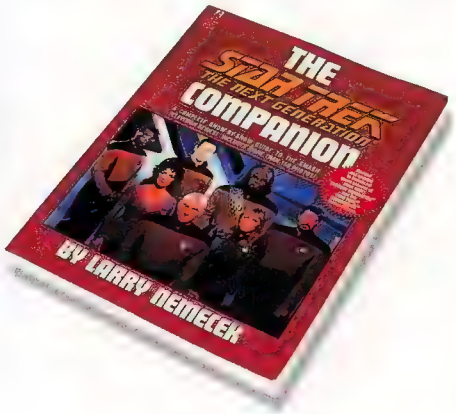
Text: **MJ Simpson**

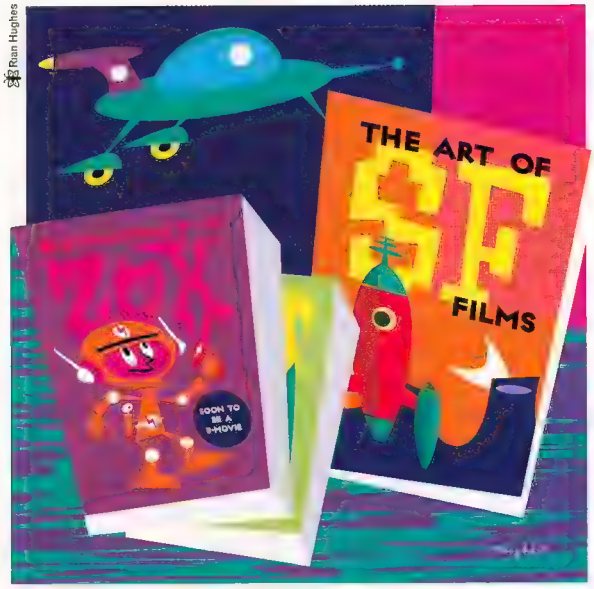
The revised edition of Larry Nemecek's official *Star Trek Companion* now includes all seven seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, plus the *Generations* movie. The layout is simple (which is just what's needed) and consistent: each episode listing kicks off with production number and code, stardate and airdate, direction/writing credits, plus guest cast list.

This is followed by a succinct plot synopsis and then the sort of background information only an official book can provide in any degree of useful detail – the development of plot ideas; concepts dropped or altered because of budget/time limitations; connections with other episodes; new hardware, costumes or races, and so on. All manner of anecdotes and quotes are also itemised – even a few amusing bloopers are mentioned. Each season is topped and tailed with introduction and production credits, and the whole illustrated with over 150 black and white photographs.

With this book, Paramount and Nemecek have produced a worthwhile and useful guide, which, coupled with its friendly, highly readable style, makes it an essential reference work for anybody seeking info on *The Next Generation*. Whatever you want to know about the series, this is just about the best place to start.

The Boxtree book, on the other hand, is devoid of Paramount sanctioning, and hence lacks photos of its subject matter. Okay, it *is* illustrated – by a few magazine covers and press conference shots, along with a slightly blurred, first season, on-set snap for the cover – but that's hardly impressive. is it? Authors Altman and Gross cover the same ground as sections 7 and 8 of the Nemecek book – the final season, plus the movie *Generations* – but with much less insight: guest cast lists are shorter, plot synopses perfunctory, and all the episode numbers out by exactly 100! The book is also padded out with badly laid out and apparently unedited press conference transcriptions. Pointless.





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The month in BOOKS

THE LATEST NOVELS REVIEWED, PLUS WHAT'S IN STORE AND THE TOP TEN SELLING SCI-FI/FANTASY TITLES.

To Build Jerusalem

Author: **John Whitbourn**
Publisher: **VGSF paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 311pp**
ISBN: **0-575-05873-0**
Text: **David Langford**

This fantasy revisits the alternative England of John Whitbourn's award-winning *A Dangerous Energy*, where magic works, science is retarded, and everyone grovels to the Vatican. It's a dark world, with witty touches – like Winston Churchill's eulogy to the martyred hero whose successful action shaped history: Saint Guy Fawkes.

Something is rotten, though, in this alternative 1995. A major new demon is loose, which, besides having alarming sexual tastes, also boasts a nasty sense of humour. King Charles IV himself is diabolically abducted. So is an entire castle. Now the workers – the Levellers – are revolting.

Enter papal investigator Adam, a one-man Inquisition who demonstrates painful martial arts on anyone who's slow to answer questions. After a spectacularly disastrous conjuration in Westminster and gory mayhem in Guildford, Adam locates the she-demon's lethal private universe and leads in the troops....

There are worse things than the demon, whose excesses are limited by an unnamed but guessable Power. England's real rottenness is the dispossession of farm workers, echoing the Thatcherite feeding frenzy of our own world. The fate of the rescued King is an ultra-black joke; Adam's fate best not thought about.

This is a worthy if slightly less strong successor to *A Dangerous Energy*: clever and uncosy.

B+

Ashes of Eden

Author: **William Shatner, with Judith & Garfield Reeves-Stevens**
Publisher: **Pocket Books hardback**
Price/page count: **£9.99, 309pp**
ISBN: **0-671-52035-0**
Text: **Karen Levell**

It had to happen, didn't it? A series of *Star Trek* novels by everyone's favourite Bill. *Ashes of Eden* is the first in a rumoured three-book Shatner deal, with the 30th anniversary title, *Return of Kirk*, due out in mid '96.

Set between *Star Trek 6* and *Star Trek: Generations*, *Ashes of Eden* centres on Captain Kirk's struggle to come to terms with a universe that has effectively pensioned him off. Of course, it's not long before a sultry damsel turns up to woo him with the offer of a dangerous and mysterious mission. From there on, it's warp speed into a plot full of Klingon arms dealers, paranoid Federation officials and, of course, the Enterprise crew.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the plot is really only of secondary importance: Shatner's insights are the prime focus, revealing aspects of Kirk's character that would be seen as heresy if written by anyone else. Would you feel safe revealing that Kirk is impotent, for instance? Equally interesting, for those willing to read between the lines, are the parallels between the thoughts of Kirk as he struggles with his celebrity status within the Federation, and Shatner's own views on becoming a world-famous cultural icon.

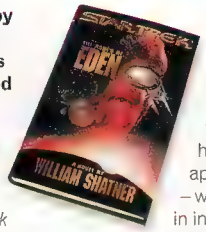
Ashes to Eden is a promising first flight into the world of *Trek* novels. The plot devices are crude in places, but it's an enjoyable read, with a depth of characterisation often missing in more action-based adventures.

B-

Moths to a Flame

Author: **Sarah Ash**
Publisher: **Millennium hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 296pp**
ISBN: **1-85798-292-4**
Text: **David Langford**

This debut novel by a new British author is packaged as "High Fantasy," and wears the exotic clothing of the genre with panache. There's a brutal, decadent slave-empire that worships undying fire, an estranged king and queen (here, the Arkhan and Arkhys), and much political in-fighting between the royals, the judiciary (the Zhudiciar – oh dear, oh dear...) and a traditionally intolerant priesthood persecuting one lone proto-scientist. Into this erotic, poisoned labyrinth are thrown two new slaves, brother and sister, from a far-off mystic island. What comes with them changes everything...



The good thing is that the new factors they introduce – hallucinogen, aphrodisiac and plague – work themselves out in intriguingly science fictional terms. Theirs is a biological rather than a magical curse (although it's a cycle that leads back to metamorphosis and magic) and, most of the time, it makes excellent sense.

Moths is fast-moving and yet told in effectively lush, fey language. Sometimes this lapses into repetition or hyperbole, as when one chap's hair is "a silkfall of moonstained ashsilver" – quite – but overall it works well. Many writers would have padded *Moths* into a trilogy, but Ash has better control of her material. Definitely an author to watch.

B

Permutation City

Author: **Greg Egan**
Publisher: **Computer Millennium paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 310pp**
ISBN: **1-85798-218-5**
Text: **David Langford**

Greg Egan is dead clever – too clever, perhaps, for lazier readers, who'll be deterred by the complex issues this novel likes to explore. He begins with a now-routine SF idea, the software simulation of human personalities, and then takes it on a wild journey beyond reality.

We imagine computerised personality "Copies" as thinking with supercomputer speed. Egan's insight is that they'll run in slow motion because of the vast calculations involved. Rich Copies can buy more processing power and

Net Trek

Author: **Kelly Maloni, Ben Greenman, Kristin Miller and Jeff Hearn**
Publisher: **Computer Manuals**
☎ **(0121) 706 6000**
Price/page count: **£17.46, 400pp**
ISBN: **0-679-76186-1**
Text: **Clive Parker**

The Internet is a gold mine of *Star Trek* information, trivia, images, stories and sound samples. One reason for this is that virtually everyone who uses it is a closet sci-fi freak – *Star Trek*, in particular, is spectacularly popular among the 30 million or so people who have access to the Net worldwide.

In fact, there's so much info about *Star Trek* on-line that it can be a real nightmare trying to track down specific stuff about the original series, the movies, *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager*. That's where *Net Trek* comes in. The four authors of this hefty reference guide have managed to cram its 400 pages with details of *Star Trek* sites provided on the Internet, or by BBSs, CompuServe or other – mainly American – services.

The book is split into logical sections, detailing the *Star Trek* universe and the phenomenon of *Star Trek*, along with individual chapters devoted to the four series, real space information, and other sci-fi sites (such as *Babylon 5*, *Doctor Who* and so on). What's more, each chapter is packed with pointers to other relevant sites. The *Star Trek* universe chapter, for example, directs you to sources of information about M Class planets, alternative time lines, aliens, and pictures of every ship that's appeared in any of the *Trek* series. You can even find out how many times Wesley saved the Enterprise D, and how many aliens Riker has, er, "associated" with.

A nice touch is a running trivia quiz throughout the book called "Ask Spot," which poses questions on all aspects of *Star Trek*. Great stuff. Or perhaps you fancy taking a gander at areas devoted to erotic stories featuring the characters from *The Next Generation?* Whatever you're after, it's all listed here.

As with most Net things these days, the best *Star Trek* areas to visit are on the World Wide Web, a graphical network capable of displaying graphics and text on-screen in the form of "virtual magazines." One of the best is Paramount's own official Web site, which is overflowing with all kinds of data about the various shows – the *Voyager* area, in particular, is superb.

An excellent book then – impeccably researched and brilliantly put together – and an essential buy for the netsurfing Trekker who wants to find out *everything* there is to know about the cult series. After it landed on my desk, I spent the rest of the day on the Internet trawling for suitable files. What higher recommendation can there be than that?

A+

The month in BOOKS

Requiem

Author: **Graham Joyce**
Publisher: **Creed paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 305pp**
ISBN: **0-451-18434-3**
Text: **David Langford**

Did it happen or didn't it? This psychological tale of hauntings puts its hero through exhausting emotional switchbacks where nothing is as it first seems. In one plot strand, Tom Webster may be suffering visitations from his wife Katie, whose accidental death makes him feel strangely and inexplicably guilty. But take that one tiny betrayal as the last straw in an already struggling relationship, and....

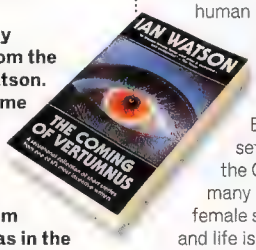
Another haunting is far older. Tom flees on holiday to Jerusalem, home of an old flame. Now, besides Katie reaching from the deeps, he has visions of an aged Mary Magdalene. Both hint at an ancient tale which ties in with some unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls detailing an alternative crucifixion story, and how St Paul hijacked the Gospel to write its female participants out of history.

A lovingly described Jerusalem holds the storylines together, with its rich mix of danger, mysticism and exotic sleaze. Not a safe place for Tom to go over the edge, see long-tailed djinni in the streets, and decide that temples built on lies must be destroyed. Reality has grown unreliable: the most shocking of the sex scenes (of which there are plenty) never apparently happen at all.

Good, vivid characters and lashings of menace make Joyce's slick novel a highly disturbing read. **B**

The Coming of Vertumnus

Author: **Ian Watson**
Publisher: **VGSF paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 288pp**
ISBN: **0-575-05921-4**
Text: **David Langford**



Here are 11 highly varied stories from the ingenious Mr Watson. Some are SF, some unclassifiable, and some shade into horror. But the horror comes from strange angles, as in the tales of a talking city, a glassy vertiginous prison and an accursed extractor fan – or the one about the New Testament which Jewish concentration camp victims are forced to write in their own blood, and which connects disturbingly to the ancient legend of the Golem.

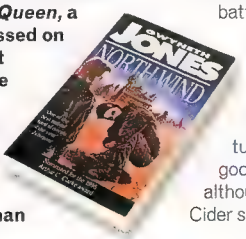
The SF includes one almost ordinary story about Aliens Who Test Humanity, an extremely fishy genetic romp, a deranged account of a civilisation living in the spiral groove of one record in a juke-box universe, two strongly disorientating tales where reality, dream and hallucination play musical chairs, and the mini-novel "Nanoware Time." In the latter, devious aliens offer us nanotechnological mental control over "demons" that can hack the software of the universe, but without explaining who the demons are or where they come from... And there's a nasty surprise in this one which has Watson exuberantly hurling spanners into metaphysics.

Of the puns and wordplay it is wiser not to speak. Something enjoyable for everyone, and something to annoy everyone too. **B-**

North Wind

Author: **Gwyneth Jones**
Publisher: **VGSF paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 281pp**
ISBN: **0575-059-206**
Text: **David Langford**

In this sequel to the award-winning *White Queen*, a century has passed on Earth since first contact with the visiting alien Aleutians. These are genuinely fascinating creations – human enough to seem understandable, yet different enough to warrant the term "alien."



Aleutians are casual killers because death isn't final for them – and they share memories by constantly exchanging "wanderers," mobile clumps of body cells which act like giant human pheromones... One diplomatic problem is therefore the human gut-feeling that these visitors are infested with crawling parasites.

North Wind is mainly a love story of communication and non-communication between human hero Sid and the alien Bella, whom he sees as female – although other Aleutians consider Bella a "him." The setting is Earth after the Gender Wars (where many men fought on the female side and vice versa) and life is a maze of shifting allegiances and factions. So one implication is that the gulf of incomprehension between Sid and Bella isn't much wider than that between men and women, or any two human beings, regardless of sex.

Jones constructs splendidly complex, thoughtful, lived-in and smelly SF worlds. They're not always easy reading, admittedly, but they're always well worth your time. **A**

The Ships Of Merior

Author: **Janny Wurts**
Publisher: **HarperCollins paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 500pp**
ISBN: **0-00-224-78-5**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

There is an old rule to writing fiction: when you've finished, go back and take out 50% of the adjectives. Janny Wurts has obviously misheard this as "add 50% more adjectives." This is the second volume in The *War(s) Of Light And Shadow* and a passable – if horribly overwritten – story. The florid prose, combined with the unpronounceable character names, make it very difficult to read more than a page and a half at a go. Once I put it down, like the man said, I couldn't pick it up again.

The story itself concerns two half-brothers who are cursed to battle each other, and a multitude of sub-plots, involving various wizards and warriors. Dakar the Mad Prophet turns out to be quite a good comic character, although in a Red Rock Cider sort of way he seems to be neither mad nor a prophet. You also get a map and a glossary for your money, both sure signs of narrative inadequacy – good writers can explain geography and language as they go along.

Presumably, there is a market for this sort of thing, but I'm damned if I know where it is... **D**

The Making of Tank Girl

Author: **Frank Wynne**
Publisher: **Titan Books**
Price: **£7.99**
ISBN: **1-85286-621-7**
Text: **Paul Thomason**

If there was ever a comic strip that deserved the big screen treatment, *Tank Girl* is it. The visual element of Jamie Hewlett and Alan Martin's anarchic post-punk creation, the loose story of a girl, her half-kangaroo/half-human boyfriend, beloved tank and never-ending quest for a tin of lager and a bit of peace and quiet in the Australian Outback would seem to lend itself perfectly to the medium.

Frank Wynne, the author of this book, is also the editor of *Deadline* magazine, where *Tank Girl* first appeared, and is thus in the perfect position to provide in-depth insight into not only the making of the film, but why *Tank Girl* is such an interesting character in her own right. There are loads of movie stills, tons of pre-production drawings – and plenty of behind-the-scenes interviews and background information. The best bit of the book – for me, at any rate – is its in-depth look at the movie's special effects, created by Stan Winston Studios (You want to know how Ice-T felt about being covered in 40lbs of kangaroo make-up in the 120° heat of the Arizona desert? It's all here.) For fans of anarchic kitsch, *Tank Girl* is going to be one of the biggest movies of the year, and *The Making Of...* is a well-written guide to how it was all achieved. **B+**

Coming soon

Doctor Who: Original Sin and System Shock Virgin **15 June**
Another *New Adventure* (ie. set post-cancellation).

The Hallows
Signet Creed **29 June**
New novel from top dark fantasy author Michael Scott, following new imprint's May debut.

Judge Dredd Boxtree **30 June**
Neal Barrett Jr-penned novelisation of *2000AD*-based Stallone-starrer.

The Making Of Judge Dredd, The Art Of Judge Dredd
Boxtree **30 June**
Behind-the-scenes look at this hot new movie, plus separate book of production artwork.

(We'll be running and in-depth feature on *Judge Dredd* in next month's issue of SFX, so don't miss that.)

Doctor Who: Sky Pirates and The Sorcerer's Apprentice
Virgin **July**
Further *New* and *Missing Adventures* of everyone's favourite Time Lord.

Terry Pratchett's Discworld Companion Corgi **July**
Co-written by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Briggs, this gets a paperback release in July.

Best-selling SF Books

X-Files storm the book charts

At specialist SF book and comic store Forbidden Planet, some familiar names are selling well, including the latest fantasy novels from Piers Anthony and Robert Asprin. However, the biggest hits are the latest spin-offs from popular TV SF series *Babylon 5* and *The X-Files* – the first *X-Files* novel, ***Goblins*** (reviewed on page 84), in particular, selling like the proverbial hot cakes.

The Forbidden Planet SF Book Chart

1. **The X-Files: Goblins** Charles L Grant (HarperCollins)
2. **Caterpillar's Question** Piers Anthony (Ace)
3. **Diamond Mask** Julian May (Pan)
4. **Sweet Mythtory of Life** Robert Asprin (Ace)
5. **Babylon 5: Voices** John Vornholt (Boxtree)
6. **Doc Sidhe** Aaron Allanston (Baen Books)
7. **Gods of the Well of Souls** Jack L Chalker (Del Rey)
8. **Indiana Jones: Philosopher** Stone Max McCoy (Bantam)
9. **Living with Aliens** John DeChancie (Ace)
10. **Middle of Nowhere** David Gerrold (Bantam)

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COMIC Reviews

"Morrison recommends that you burn every copy of *The Invisibles* after you've read them: you'll remember them better that way."

THE INVISIBLES

Those despairing of mainstream comics obviously haven't seen The Invisibles...

Publisher: **DC/Vertigo**
Writer: **Grant Morrison**
Artists: **Steve Yeowell, Jill Thompson and others**
Issues: **1-9**
Price: **£1.25 per issue**

Text: **Stuart Campbell**

It begins with a grenade and a huge "FUUUUUUUCK!", and takes in arson, the Beatles, joyriding, sinister *A Clockwork Orange*-style brainwashing in a Young-Offender's-Institution-from-Hell-peopled-by-soul-sucking-aliens'-servants-with-opaque-shades... And that's just the first episode.

Grant Morrison's much-heralded *The Invisibles* is just nine issues old, and already it's covered more ground than most comics do in their entire run. It's rare these days to read a mainstream comic book that does more than merely set a hero up in the first couple of issues, and then throw big baddies and cataclysmic situations at him month after month, but Morrison's latest bucks you like a bad-tempered bronco as you endeavour to negotiate its fantastic, spiky, spider's-web plotlines. The comic is intended to run until 1 January 2000, with a (relatively) self-contained novel, itself comprising several distinct but connected "story arcs," realised every two years. The first arcs, "Down And Out In Heaven And Hell" and "Arcadia," bring Byron and Shelley, transvestite witches,

WHY SHOULD I WAIT FOR YOU IF YOU CAN'T KEEP UP, eh?
WHAT ARE YOU SCARED OF, BOY?
I'M NOT SCARED OF NOTHING, RIGHT?
TAKE YOUR HAND OFF ME!
THROUGH THE SHARP HAWTHORNS BLOW THE WINDS HA! I GO TO THY COLD BED AND WARM THEE.
OLD TOM O'BEDLAM'LL FRIGHT YOU. MAKE YOU SHIT YOUR PANTS, I WILL.
YOU'LL SEE

Krishna, the Marquis de Sade and the severed head of John the Baptist into a story set largely during the French Revolution. But to list the plot by characters and locations is to do a disservice to the various philosophical notions the comic is always trying to prod you into examining for yourself.

Or maybe not. Morrison (scripting star of such previous strips as *Zenith, Animal Man, Arkham Asylum, Doom Patrol* and the ace *Big Dave)* recommends that you burn every issue of *The Invisibles* after you've read it ("Nobody actually will, but if they do it'll make them happy"), suggesting seductively that you'll remember it more interestingly that way. It's a smart idea, but personally I'd advise hanging on to at least a year's issues at a time. First, because it makes a lot more sense if you read a big chunk of it at once, and second because you'll get a much more impressive bonfire to keep you warm on the streets at Christmas time.

Still, the comic itself is generally a lot easier to understand than the letters page, which plays host to all manner of scary deviants (sample extract: "zeitgeist * yeoman yeowell's yeodels * Xistentialist little thugs * wormhole eyes * virgin bombers * unplanned umbilical ties" – and that's just the opening sentence), but at least it's a more interesting than the pages of fawning, nitpicking and dodgy poetry you usually get at the back of anything even vaguely complicated. All the same, I can't help feeling a bit of a thicky when I read it – if, like me, your grasp of literary culture starts at *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy,* you're going to have to do a bit of honing up down the library to get the most out of all the little references and signposts which litter every frame of *The Invisibles* (and make any sense at all out of most of the letters), even if it's only to get all the jokes.

Then again, jokes are hardly the comic's *raison d'être* anyway. This is probably Morrison's least light-hearted work to date, with the central character, Dane MacGowan, portrayed as a whining little Scally thug with no-one's welfare in mind other than his own, and although you pity his ever more bewildering plight, you never really feel on his side. That's just a part of the overall plan, though, or so it seems – you get the feeling Morrison never wants the reader to feel settled or complacent in *The Invisibles'* world(s). There are plenty of other, more likeable characters (the cool King Mob, the camp Lord Fanny or the witch Ragged Robin, who's at times oddly reminiscent of *The Sandman's* Delirium, are just a few examples), but even they're rarely what they appear to be, and if they ever are, you can be sure they'll be something else altogether pretty soon.

But is *The Invisibles* actually any good? Well, of course it is. The dialogue, always Morrison's strong suit, is never less than razor-sharp, the art snarls off the page and the story spits, brawls and kicks out in half-a-dozen different directions at once. Interesting is as dull as it gets, and it's hardly ever as dull as that. Maybe you should buy two copies of every issue, keep one and burn the other one. Then again, I think that's missing the point somewhat...

Anti-hero Dane, a snotty little Liverpool joyrider, gets a first lesson in *The Invisibles'* world from mad old Tom O'Bedlam.

PREACHER

Publisher: **DC/Vertigo**
Writer: **Garth Ennis**
Artist: **Steve Dillon**
Issues: **1-2**
Price: **£1.50 each**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

***Preacher* is the latest from Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, the team behind a very successful recent run of Vertigo's *Hellblazer*, and two of the most talented people working in regular comics today. If anyone writes sharper, nastier, more effectively shocking strips than Ennis I've yet to see them. Moore and Miller are obviously gods, and it'll be a while before Ennis rivals them, but his work is already right up there with the best that Wagner, Grant, Mills, Morrison, Milligan and Gaiman can offer. Dillon, meanwhile, draws deceptively simple, muted, but beautifully composed work which**

And this is one of the good guys! *Preacher*'s kinda weird, kinda disgusting, but always *very* funny.

complements the grim-and-gritty nature of Ennis' scripts perfectly.

But, anyway, what's *Preacher* all about? Well, it's like the comics equivalent of a road movie – influences ranging from Tarantino to spaghetti westerns – but with a dose of the supernatural to keep *Hellblazer* fans happy. The lead character is a failed small-town Texas preacher called Jesse – a man who's joined at the soul to a horrifying entity called Genesis. This being gives him the power to, among other things, command anyone to do exactly what he says. His travelling companions are his ex-girlfriend, and a scruffy Irish vampire called Cassidy, while ranged against them are assorted redneck cops, an unstoppable zombie gunfighter and, knowing Ennis, quite probably a whole bunch of angels, demons and the like too.

Preacher has a lot going for it: top-quality art, an intriguing storyline, plenty of great dialogue, plus the fact that we're still only at the beginning of the story, so things can only get better. If it doesn't quite have the emotional charge and sheer audacity of *Hellblazer* at its best, that's sure to come with time. Ellis is still setting the scene here. All in all, a hit.

A-

The month in COMICS

THE LATEST COMIC BOOKS REVIEWED, PLUS WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE AND CHART NEWS.

BOB, THE GALACTIC BUM

DC

Writers: **Alan Grant, John Wagner**
Artist: **Carlos Ezquera**
Issues: **1-4**
Price: **£1.25**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

***Bob*: It's nice to see *Judge Dredd* artist Ezquera at last getting recognition in the States...**

Grant and Wagner are probably the most reliable – and prolific – writing team in the comics industry today. Grant does most of the good *Batman* stories, Wagner still writes 90% of the *Judge Dredd* stuff worth talking about, and between them they've racked up hits like *The Last American, Judgement on Gotham, The Demon, The Bogie Man, Button Man, Judge Anderson, Al's Baby* and *Strontium Dog*.

When they work together now, it's usually on one-shots and mini-series like this, a picaresque romp through the galaxy, starring the eponymous interstellar tramp Bob, his ultra-dumb pal Buck Fifty, a thinly-disguised alien version of Prince Charles, psychotic bounty hunter Lobo (there to boost sales, presumably) and assorted space pirates.

The result is a solid and often amusing romp, full of great dialogue, good jokes, plenty of action – and explosions. And it's nice to see Spanish comic veteran and *Dredd* co-creator (with John Wagner) Ezquera getting some US comics work for a change. His scratchy, cartoony style won't be to everyone's taste, but give it a chance. It does grow on you.

B+

HARLAN ELLISON'S DREAM CORRIDOR

Dark Horse Comics

Writers: **Harlan Ellison and others**
Artists: **John Byrne, Craig Elliot and others**
Issue: **1**
Price: **£1.95**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

He's an intriguing author, Harlan Ellison – and Dark Horse turns out consistently high-quality comics, so it's something of a surprise to have to say that this new anthology is a bit of a disappointment.

There are three big problems – the major ones being the amount of space available and the quality of the adaptations. The lead item in *Dream Corridor 1*, for example, is the first part of an adaptation of one of Ellison's most famous short stories, *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream*, by John Byrne. This is fine as far as it goes, but unfortunately that's not very far – this is only the first part of four, and at a mere seven pages long is over almost as soon as it's begun. Spinning out a 28-page story over four monthly issues seems far too greedy – two parts would have made much more sense.

The second story – *Knox*, adapted by Diana Shutzat – illustrates the second problem perfectly. It looks pretty enough, but doesn't really make any sense. *Turnpike*, the third story, has nice old-school Dave McKean-like art from newcomer Craig Elliot, but illustrates a third problem – there's hardly any dialogue, so the adaptations are far too caption heavy (only Byrne has the sense to use speech-bubbles).

A variable title, then – and one that seems too bitty and varied in content to really hold the attention.

C+

DEATH RACE 2020

Roger Corman's Cosmic Comics

Writers: **Pat Mills, Tony Skinner**
Artist: **Kevin O'Neill**
Issue: **1**
Price: **£1.65**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

***Death Race 2020*: A great, all-action start to the new Roger Corman comics line.**

The core team behind *Death Race 2020* was also behind *Marshal Law* and the original incarnation of *2000AD's Nemesis the Warlock*, so fans of both will know what to expect here – lots of satire, plenty of strong characters and heaps of ultra-violence. Mills has one of the strongest imaginations in comics – his past work includes *Slaine* and *Accident Man* – while O'Neill's artwork was once banned by the American Comics Code!

Death Race 2020 kicks off a new line of comics published by B-movie king Roger Corman, and is inspired by the 1975 hit-and-run car race flick *Death Race 2000*. We're now 20 years into the future and Carradine's character, Frankenstein, ex-race driver and now president of America, is trying to ban the Death Race – but the public want it back. There's lots of violence, lots of good jokes – and lots of car crashes. It's a hoot.

B

Coming soon

Batman: Two Face – Crime and Punishment DC **30 May**
Probably the most promising of a stack of *Batman Forever*-related comics, by J. Marc DeMatteis and *Daredevil* artist Scott McDaniel.

Conan 1 Marvel **27 June**
New version of comics/pulp barbarian classic, with more SF elements and added raunch.

Egypt 1 Vertigo/DC **27 June**
Young drifter wakes up in a fantastic version of ancient Egypt, complete with real magic and living gods. By Pete Milligan and Glyn Dillon.

The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot
Dark Horse/Legend **25 July**
Ace new *Godzilla*/'50s sci-fi influenced action series from comics God Frank Miller and the non-too-shabby Geof Darrow.

Rian Hughes

Best-selling Comics

Charge of The Wrinkly Brigade

Comics like ***The Invisibles***, ***Hellblazer*** and ***Sandman*** might get all the critical acclaim, but as this Forbidden Planet-compiled chart shows, sales of the old favourites are still nothing to be sniffed at. Excitement around the two DC giants remains strong, with ***Batman*** and ***Superman*** comics shifting in great numbers. ***Wonder Woman*** looks set to get even hotter when John Byrne takes over with #101 too. But perhaps the most interesting books to look out for are Frank Miller's ***Sin City***, and the brilliant ***Dark Empire 2*** mini-series, which boasts, in Cam Kennedy, one of the best *Star Wars* artists you've ever seen.

The Forbidden Planet Comic Chart

1. **Batman** #519 DC
2. **The Incredible Hulk** #429 Marvel
3. **Batman: Shadow of the Bat** #38 DC
4. **Factor X** #4 Marvel
5. **Sin City** #5 Dark Horse
6. **Weapon X** #4 Marvel
7. **Star Wars: Dark Empire 2** #4 Dark Horse
8. **Superboy** #16 DC
9. **Superman: Man of Steel** #45 DC
10. **Wonder Woman** #98 DC

"*Bioforge* isn't just a superb game, it's an entertaining piece of science fiction too, snatching elements from *The Terminator, Aliens, Total Recall* and *Die Hard...*"

BIOFORGE

The world's best interactive movie doesn't shout about it

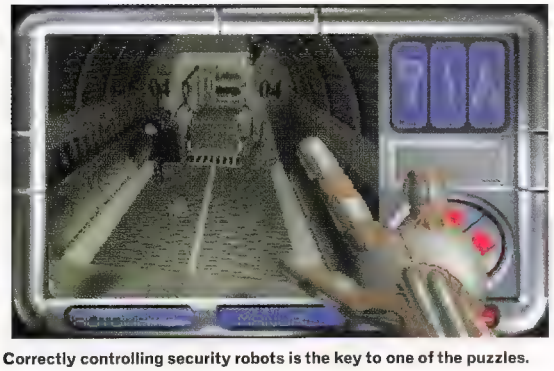
Format: **PC CD-ROM**
Price: **£44.99**
Publisher: **Electronic Arts ☎ (01753) 549442**

Text: **Andy Butcher**

For a while now the "interactive movie" has been something of a Holy Grail to the games industry, with software developers packing CD-ROMs with digitised video footage and slapping buzzwords on packaging in a desperate (and usually doomed) attempt to jump on the bandwagon. It's a bit ironic, then, that the game which comes closest to achieving genuine interactive movie status contains not a single frame of video, and doesn't mention the term anywhere.

Bioforge is a science fiction adventure game in which you control a mysterious character who's trying to discover, among other things, who he actually *is*. From the moment you wake up – in a cold, sterile cell, suffering from complete amnesia, and painfully aware that half your body has been replaced by cybernetic parts – the game immerses you in a highly atmospheric and coherently structured environment. Viewing the action from a third person perspective that switches angles as you move, you must escape from your prison, and then attempt to discover just what's going on and who did this to you. Along the way, there are puzzles to solve, clues to find and obstacles, both human and alien, to overcome.

This rather '50s looking monster is too hard to kill face-to-face, but you *can* chill him out a bit, luckily...



Correctly controlling security robots is the key to one of the puzzles.

The key to *Bioforge's* success is in the way in which it seamlessly blends its components into one consistent whole. State-of-the-art graphics, stunning sound, cunning puzzles and hand-to-hand combat, along with a compelling plot, form a whole that's always greater than the sum of its parts. You never find yourself thinking: "Well, that's the beat-'em-up section done, now let's solve the puzzle" – the whole thing flows together too smoothly for that (although, admittedly, the fighting is good enough to stand as a game in its own right).

But *Bioforge* isn't just a superb game, it's an entertaining piece of science fiction, snatching elements from *The Terminator, Aliens, Total Recall* and *Die Hard,* mixing them up with a few original ideas, and giving you a very real feeling of being inside a film. It also leaves itself open to a sequel, and just for once I'm actually looking forward to it... ☞

A-

PANZER DRAGOON

Format: **Sega Saturn**
Price: **£60 (import)**
Publisher: **Sega Japan**

Text: **Steve Jarratt**

Bearing possibly the most misleading title of all time, Sega's future-fantasy shoot-'em-up involves no Panzers (tanks or otherwise) and Dragoons with only one "o." It is, in short, *Space Harrier* brought up to date, with a very convincing line in 3D visuals and a genuinely Japanese feel about it. Which is odd, because the bulk of the creature design and computer-generated video footage was by French comic artist Jean "Moebius" Giraud and his StarWatcher Graphics company.

***Panzer Dragoon*'s hero begins his crusade atop an insectoid dragon (its peculiar face is just off-screen).**

Moebius' bizarre vision certainly elevates *Panzer Dragoon* above the run-of-the-mill giant robot/armoured suit/spaceship fare which comprises most new CD-ROM software. The rendered inter-level sequences blend not-quite-seamlessly-but-still-nicely with the in-game graphics, creating a believable gameworld and an engrossing story.

The quest takes you from submerged ruins to a *Dune*-style desert, through caves and clouds, and across verdant forests to a climactic and genuinely breathtaking finale. Here you face the a giant (like, *vast)* dragon that makes Pete's reptilian chum look like Mr Blobby, and would scare the crap out of Saint George.

But for all its visual splendour, *Panzer Dragoon* suffers from a shortage of levels and a difficulty setting aimed at joypad novices. Much as this singular gaming experience is worth a few repeat plays, it offers relatively poor value for money. ☞

C+

***Panzer Dragoon* really is a one-off visual experience, awash with action and excitement – but it *is* £60...**

© Rian Hughes

Coming soon

Command & Conquer
Virgin PC **June**
Futuristic strategy/wargame.

Mechwarrior 2
Activision PC **June**
Long-awaited sequel to futuristic fighting machine title.

The Raven Project
Mindscape/Cryo PC **July**
3D shoot-'em-up affair featuring aliens-invade-the-earth scenario.

Star Trek: TNG: A Final Unity
MicroProse PC **July**
Long-awaited adventure game based on the famous TV show, and said to be very good indeed.

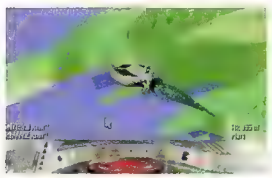
The month in NEW MEDIA

GENRE VIDEO AND COMPUTER GAMES, GALLUP CHARTS, PLUS NEWS OF RELEASES IN THE PIPELINE.

FRONTIER: FIRST ENCOUNTERS

Format: **PC CD-ROM/floppy**
Price: **£39.99**
Publisher: **Gametek**
☎ **(01753) 553445**
Text: **Andy Butcher**

The third release in the series that began with the classic *Elite* in the early '80s, *Frontier: First Encounters* retains that title's elegant



and now classic gameplay – but pushes things that little bit further.

The fictional setting is more detailed and involving, there are new ships and toys to play with, and – most importantly – there are aliens. The Thargoids, that mysterious and highly advanced race from *Elite*, are back, and *First Encounters* not only gives you the chance to find them, but also to decide the fate of their relationship with humanity too. Of course, you're free to ignore all that if you want and just make money trading instead.

But there are problems. First, the presentation, which, while better than the ugly *Frontier*, is still far from appealing. More seriously, the program is horribly bugged. Gametek is supposedly ironing out these glitches – an updated version should be released at the end of May – but until then I'd hold on to your cash. If it weren't for that, it'd get a B+ rating. Shame, that.

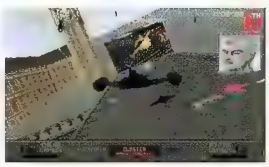
D

The graphics are nicer, but still not the strong point of *First Encounters*. Luckily, the gameplay's excellent (when you're not coping with the bugs, that is).

SLIPSTREAM 5000

Format: **PC CD-ROM**
Price: **£39.99**
Publisher: **Gremlin**
☎ **(01742) 753423**
Text: **Andy Butcher**

What a pleasant change it makes to play something quick, simple *and* fun. *Slipstream 5000* is a futuristic racing sport in



London is the location for just one of the many tortuous courses in *Slipstream*.

which ten competitors fly specialised craft along a variety of courses.

Easy to get into, with responsive controls, great computer-controlled opponents lovely graphics and incredibly addictive gameplay, this is perfect for whiling away the odd half an hour or so. And on a half-decent PC the sensation of speed is phenomenal.

B

SF Computer Games Chart

PC rules okay!

PC games continue to dominate the scene, with SF/fantasy titles performing very well indeed. Oldie ***SimCity 2000*** – the futuristic city-builder – continues to sell well, as do ***Doom 2*** and the many ***Star Wars*** spin-offs. The real ones to watch out for, though, are ***Frontier: First Encounters*** (when it's properly debugged) and ***Discworld***.

Chart compiled by Gallup.

Top Ten SF/Fantasy Computer Games

1. **SimCity 2000** (PC) Maxis
2. **Frontier: First Encounters** (PC) Gametek
3. **Discworld** (PC) Psygnosis
4. **Doom 2** (PC) Virgin
5. **TIE Fighter** (PC) LucasArts/ Virgin
6. **Rise of the Robots** (PC) Mirage/Time Warner
7. **X-Com: Terror of the Deep** (PC) MicroProse
8. **Crystal Dragon** (Amiga) Black Legend/Kompart
9. **UFO: Enemy Unknown** (Amiga) MicroProse
10. **X-Wing** (PC) US Gold

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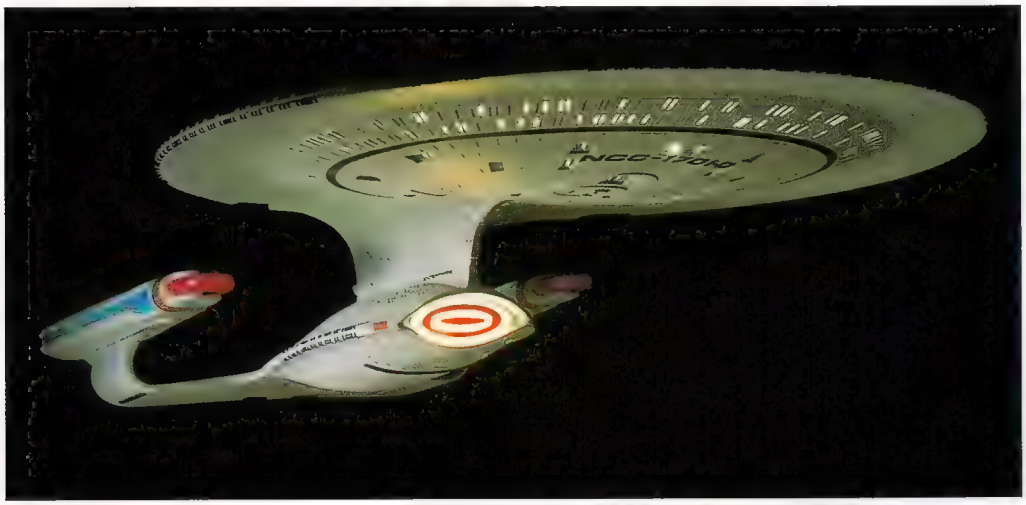


Manufacturer: **Hothouse Productions**
Price: **£1,499 complete; £799 kit (including VAT)**
Contact: ☎ **(01206) 764434**

Text: **Mike Reccia**

Need a massive centrepiece for your living room? Not ashamed to flaunt your Trekkerdom for all to see? Then Hothouse's giant *Star Trek* kit might just be the most exciting plaything of the year...

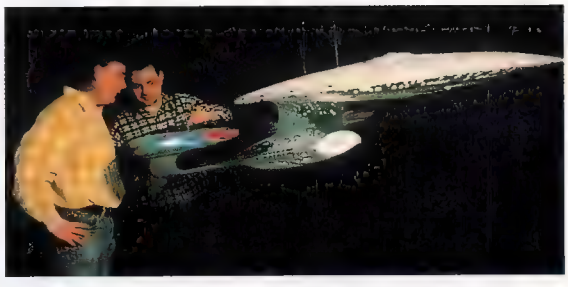
If science fiction has a more potent symbol than the Enterprise, I can't think of one. Ever since it first wooshed out of our screens in the late '60s I've wanted to own her – and now, it seems, I can. Happily, I've not been alone in wanting my own Enterprise, and over the years the Federation's flagship has become a firm favourite with SF model makers and toy collectors everywhere. We've had plastic construction kits, pewter models, torpedo-spitting diecasts and a host of other collectibles – and they've come in all sorts of incarnations too, be it the classic '60s TV original, the restyled 1980 Motion Picture version, the much bigger Enterprise-D of *The Next Generation,* or the little-seen vessels that existed in-between. But if you thought *they* were good, wait till you get an eyeful of this. Or better still, hope you don't, because this particular incarnation is absolutely *huge*...

Perhaps the most surprising thing about this highly detailed leviathan is that it's not a product of American *Trek* fandom or one of the other major model manufacturers. Instead, it's been put together by a tiny Colchester company called Hothouse Productions, who obviously have some big ideas. Very big. The plan was simple: to create a fully licenced, commercially available replica of the *Next Generation* Enterprise that would be as close to the actual TV effects models in size and detail as possible. Working from drawings, slides and other material supplied by Paramount Pictures and Industrial Light and Magic (the facility that actually built the TV models), Hothouse evolved detailed plans that all parties concerned eventually agreed on as representing the definitive Enterprise-D.

The next job was to create a master model from which to cast their baby – an extremely demanding task at the best of times, made worse by the fact that there's hardly a straight line on the entire ship. Working on the whole thing at once quickly proved too awkward, so the design was broken down into 20 separate sections which were then pegged together to create the six-and-a-half foot long master. The Enterprise's distinctive slit window shapes were then individually milled into the surface by their hundreds, and the ship's skin subtly panelled to match the original.

You could be forgiven for thinking that once this master was completed, the job would be complete, but no. Each individual Enterprise, cast in fibreglass from this master model, takes Hothouse *over a week* to complete by hand. Selected windows, lit from inside, are painstakingly cut out (no two Enterprises are the same), and, once spray-painted, the ship is equipped with

Impressive or what? The Hothouse Enterprise model in all its glory.



And here it is again – just to prove how bloody big it is. You'd better make sure you string this one up with sturdy piano wire...

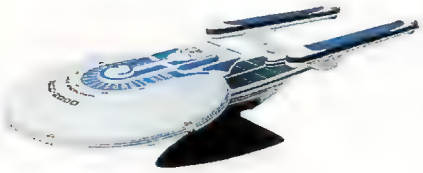
finishing details and graphics. Interior lighting is provided by six replaceable 16-watt fluorescent bulbs, accessed via a panel on the saucer section's top surface. Translucent parts enable the main deflector dish (located in the front part of the secondary hull, below and to the rear of the saucer), warp nacelle caps, side strips and impulse engines to boldly glow too.

Of course, that leaves one big question – the cost. Are you ready for this? Well, **£1,499** (including VAT) delivers the finished starship to you, complete with lights, suspension cables, hooks for your ceiling, power cable and – yes! – a plug. Ambitious model makers, however, can opt for it in kit form, which comes at **£799** (again, including VAT). This comes without lighting, but you can buy that from the company at a later date.

Interested? Well, make sure you've got sufficient ceiling space first (the saucer section alone is five feet in diameter), then get in touch with **Hothouse Productions** at **Studio 6, Sussex Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3QH** for the full story, or phone ☎ **(01206) 764434**. (Hothouse also holds the rights to make a six-foot original series Enterprise and a Klingon Bird Of Prey, and is currently deciding which one to build first.)

A+

18INCH ERTL EXCELSIOR



Manufacturer: **Ertl**
Price: **£17**
Contact: **Any good toy/model shop**

Text: **Mike Reccia**

***Trek* modellers who want something a little more compact than Hothouse's Enterprise would do well to consider Ertl's new USS Excelsior injection moulded kit. The Excelsior first appeared as an experimental Federation starship with "trans-warp drive" in the film *Star Trek 3*, and has since guested in *Star Trek 4*, *Star Trek 6*, *Star Trek: Generations* (subtly redressed as the Enterprise-B) and (as other ships) in several *The Next Generation* episodes.**

Ertl's 35-part kit builds up into a nicely detailed 18" long model and comes with easy-to-follow instruction sheet, comprehensive painting guide and full colour decals. The warp drive radiators, field generators, deflector dish and impulse engine exhausts are moulded in transparent plastic, so you can paint them from the back to give the illusion of illumination. All parts fit together well, although the Excelsior benefits from model filler around the underside of the impulse engine assemblies before painting, plus glued-in weights in the secondary hull so that she sits more securely on the stand provided.

The waterslide decals are tiny, fiddly and tend to want to stick to your fingers more than the ship, but a bit of perseverance should see you do an okay job. All in all, very impressive – and Ertl's best *Trek* starship kit to date.

A

The month in TOYS & MODELS

RECENT AND UPCOMING MODEL RELEASES, PLUS A DETAILED GUIDE TO HOT NEW TOYS & MODELS COMING SOON. EDITED BY MIKE RECCIA, EDITOR OF SCI-FI & FANTASY MODELS MAGAZINE.

Recent releases

VINYL BONES

Manufacturer: **Ertl**
Price: **£20**
Contact: **Any good toy/model shop**
Text: **Mike Reccia**

The only problem with the Bones kit is that it doesn't look like Bones...

It seems to be a bit of a *Star Trek* special this month. Ertl's Doctor McCoy 12" vinyl figure can, with a little work, give you a fairly lifelike representation of Bones from the original '60s series, complete with circular transporter base. At around £20, this simple nine-part kit serves as an uncomplicated introduction to the world of vinyl figure modelling, which is hot in Japan and the States, and rapidly gaining ground over here.

Once you've trimmed the parts with a sharp knife and scrubbed them in hot, soapy water to remove any greasy mould release agent, all you have to do is simply superglue the bits together. And remember to always use acrylic paints or sprays – enamels and cellulose-based colours can damage vinyl and will not dry properly. Acrylics are also water-based, which is particularly useful when brush-painting faces and building up areas of light and shadow – i.e. for detailing the bags under the good doctor's eyes.

McCoy, who needs filling around the waistline (not too much, unless you want him to look like Kirk) and shoulder joins before painting, is also supplied with a tricorder, slung over his shoulder. He makes an excellent companion piece to Ertl's other 12" classic series releases of Kirk with phaser and Scotty with engineering probe – the only real downside being that his face could look more like DeForest Kelly's. By the way, Spock is set to follow any time now.

B

KLAATU AND GORT

Manufacturer: **Biliken**
Price: **£125 (plus £4 P&P)**
Contact: **Comet Miniatures**
☎ **(0171) 2283702**
Text: **Mike Reccia**

Remember the SF movie classic *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, in which a terrified Patricia Neal uttered the memorable phrase "Klaatu Barada Nickto!" to calm Michael Rennie's rampaging robot companion?

Well, now advanced vinyl modellers can recreate Rennie's Klaatu and Gort (the robot) as 1:6 scale (12") vinyl figures, available on import from Japanese company Biliken. The vinyls are boxed as a pair – Michael Rennie's spacesuited alien Klaatu figure available with a normal or helmeted head, and his menacing sidekick Gort detailed to the *nth* degree – you can even see the crease in the suit's crotch! The pair, not available in most shops, will cost serious modellers **£125**, plus **£4** P&P from **Comet Miniatures** at **48 Lavender Hill, London SW11 5RH**. Alternatively, call the company direct on ☎ **(0171) 228 3702**.

A

BORG SHIP

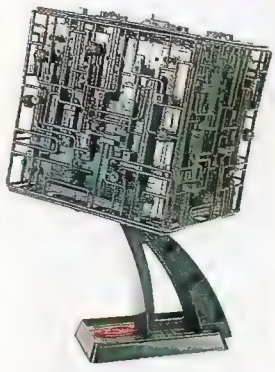
Manufacturer: **Bandai**
Price: **£24.99**
Contact: **Bandai UK**
☎ **(01489) 790944**
Text: **Paul Thomason**

Brrrr. The Borg are nasty, aren't they? Like hive ants or something – a collective consciousness inhabiting huge cuboid ships that can race about at tremendous speeds (in excess of Warp 9.9, we're told) and trash any number of Federation starships at will. Not the sort of guys you want to run into when you're coming home from the pub on your own...

Bandai's Collectors Series Edition model of the Borg ship looks just as menacing as the screen version, and like all Bandai *Trek* merchandise, it's well-made and authentic in appearance, and comes with a removable display stand and a separate battery compartment cover, which fits in the same place as the stand, so that kids can play with the model as a toy. It also comes with a certificate of authenticity for collectors among you. The model lights up at the flick of a switch, and provides three sounds – engine noise, tractor beam and laser cannon – which play at the touch of a button, and are actual samples taken from the TV soundtrack.

All in all, a cool, if a little overpriced, piece of kit that you can terrorise the cat with no end.

A+



The Borg "Oxo cube" ship – a fancy mantlepiece ornament.

Coming soon

Area S4 UFO
Testors **Out now**
Allegedly accurate model of "real" UFO supposedly hidden by the US government in the Nevada desert. Comes complete with Grays aliens.

Judge Dredd
Mega Heroes **Out now**
A plethora of movie tie-ins is headed by this hernia-inducingly chunky, pre-painted, limited edition, 13" resin kit. Ol' Stony Face comes armed with Lawgiver, baton, unfeasibly large shoulder pads and bags of bad attitude.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
Ertl/AMT **Out now**
1:6 scale model kit of shapeshifting security chief Odo, as played by Rene Auberjonois. (Alternatively, why not save yourself several pounds and buy a lump of plasticine instead?) Similarly scaled Quark also available.

Space Precinct models
Vivid Imaginations **August**
Assorted model vehicles and action figures from Gerry Anderson's latest TV series. (See news, starting on page 10, for further details.)

Star Trek: Voyager kits
Monogram **Christmas '95**
A new range of kits based on the new Star Trek series, including Voyager itself.

© Rian Hughes

TOSH Reviews

"It's the power and stark beauty of the images that make these cards much more than something solely for collectors – although fans *will* like the fact that they're full of references to the Vertigo universe."

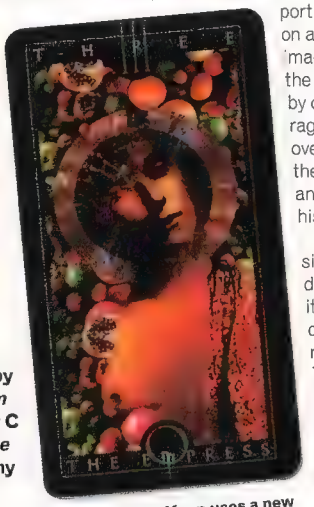
VERTIGO TAROT

Explore your future with these Vertigo heroes

Publisher: **DC/Vertigo**
Price: **£42**
Contact: **Any good book or comic shop**

Text: **Mary Branscombe and Tanais Fox**

At first glance, the Vertigo Tarot is a covetable collector's edition for fans of Vertigo comics, in which the familiar characters have been transformed into the 22 cards of the Major Arcana by the talents of Dave McKean (famous for the covers to *Sandman* and umpteen books and albums). The set comes with a lavishly designed book by Rachel Pollack (writer of *Doom Patrol* and winner of the Arthur C Clarke award for *Unquenchable Fire)* and a potted autobiography of Neil Gaiman's (writer of *Sandman,* co-author of *Good Omens* and frequent collaborator with McKean) too. Here you can learn about the mysterious origins of Tarot, "ancient teaching" disguised as a game, as well as how to do your own readings.



Artist Dave McKean uses a new warped photo-realistic technique for this set of Vertigo Tarot cards.

The Vertigo characters fit the cards well. Morpheus *(Sandman)* is cast as The Hierophant; John Constantine *(Hellblazer)* perfect as The Fool; Tim Hunter *(The Books of Magic)* becomes the Magician; Neil Gaiman's cute Goth-chick portrayal of Death *(Sandman, The High Cost of Living)* needs no justification – even the renowned Swamp Thing as The World remains true to the spirit of Alan Moore's Earth elemental.

However, some cards offer more unusual interpretations. The Emperor is often portrayed as a powerful bearded man on a throne, for instance, but here the image has been dismantled to reveal the turmoil beneath: it's represented by comic character the Geek, a ragged puppet-like creature bent over by the responsibility of pulling the strings of command, yet limp and broken – as if someone has cut his own strings.

Delirium, one of Morpheus' siblings, appears as Temperance, a decision almost delirious in itself if it wasn't for the slick way she's described – mirroring Delirium's role in the Vertigo universe with Temperance's position in the Tarot. The Tower – the most cataclysmic and yet possibly the most liberating of the Major Arcana – is the symbolic icon from The Doom Patrol's epic *Teiresias Wars.*

Shade, the Changing Man becomes The Hanged Man – with a difference, there's no beatific smile on his face, as with traditional decks; Justice isn't blind either: The Golden Age Sandman's face is obscured by a gas mask – a grim transformation of the comic star from the '30s and '40s into a clearly troubled, reflective post-modern hero for the '90s.

It's the power and stark beauty of the images (part sculpture, part computer art and every one a showcase for McKean's graphic talents) that make these cards much more than something solely for collectors, but fans *will* like the fact that they're full of references to the Vertigo universe.

In *Sandman,* for example, Lucifer is last seen relinquishing his domain and handing the keys of hell over to Morpheus before walking off to watch the sunset on a quiet beach. Here, The Devil appears resplendent with horns and a deck chair, the manacles of responsibility broken once and for all. The 56 cards of the Minor Arcana share the same bold, disturbing images, and also use classic icons from the Ryder Tarot.

This is a limited edition set that's been beautifully presented and packaged. It isn't cheap, but it's still worth having, whether you intend fortune-telling or not.

A⁻

Tim Hunter, young hero of *The Books of Magic* comic, is pressed into service as The Magician.

The month in TOSH

(...OR THE BIT OF THE MAG WHERE EVERYTHING ELSE GOES!)

PARADISE LOST IN SPACE

Format: **Six 30-minute radio episodes**
Starring: **Tony Robinson, David Haig**
Writer: **Colin Swash**
First aired: **Radio 4 (from 9 March)**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Radio SF may be thin on the ground, but it has produced some great series in the past, notably *Red Dwarf* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy.* This latest series to hit the airwaves – written by Colin Swash, producer of *Have I Got News For You* – is less frenetic, admittedly, but still enjoyable.

Tony Robinson plays Norman, an earnest terrorist whose attempts to high-jack a spaceship result in his crashlanding on an unknown planet, Oblivio, along with time-share salesman Max (David Haig). The Oblivions were, up to this point, a happy, carefree people, whose sole contact with Earth had been a copy of *The Plays Of Noel Coward.* Over the following episodes, Max and Norman accidentally introduce the innocent aliens to the concepts of war, sex, tennis and time-share properties – completely destroying both their society and their eco-system in the process. Other familiar voices among the cast include Michael Troughton (Piers from *The New Statesman)* and the original Ford Prefect, Geoff McGivern.

Paradise is the sort of wry comedy that's better suited to radio than TV, so I wouldn't hold your breath waiting for this to get the small screen treatment. Still, it's worth rooting through the listings to catch possible repeats.

B⁺

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

BBC
DIrector: **Dirk Maggs**
Starring: **William Dufris, Anita Dobson**
Running time: **2.5 hours**
Catalogue Number: **ZBBC 1717**
Price: **£12.99**
Release: **Out now**
Text: **Dave Golder**

"A movie without pictures!" screams the blurb on the back of the CD. Er, not quite. It's more like one of those old cliffhanger serials from the '30s without pictures. *The Amazing Spider-Man* was first broadcast in two-minute chunks on Radio 1 last year – and fitted in perfectly among the jingles, remixes and lobotomised DJs. As a CD it's a 150-minute endurance exercise.

The story is a very loose adaptation of Spidey's origin, which throws in The Fantastic Four, Green Goblin, Doctor Octopus, Doctor Doom and just about every other villain from the Marvel Comics' Silver Age, just for the hell of it. With music from Queen's Brian May, it's a loud, brash blend of staccato plotting and English actors shouting in bad American accents, designed for the MTV degeneration.

There are some good sound effects though.

C⁻

THE COMPLEAT FOUR SEASONS

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Publisher: **American Gramophone**
Performers: **Arnie Roth, Patrick Stewart and Musica Anima**
Catalogue number: **AGCD 801**
Price: **£11.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Did you know that Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* violin concertos came with four sonnets, possibly written by the composer himself, when first published? Thought not.

One-time starship captain Patrick "Make it so" Stewart recites the verses in this newly recorded version (the first for many years to include the poems), while soloist Arnie Roth and the Musica Anima provide the music. Roth invited Stewart to collaborate with him on the project after he provided musical accompaniment for a touring Tom Stoppard play in which Patrick was starring.

And very nice it all sounds too. Roth's interpretation is excellent, and the poems really give the music a new lease of life.

B

Rian Hughes

Okay, so just what *is* an SF convention?

Never been to one? MJ Simpson *explains all...*

The term "science fiction convention" covers a broad spectrum of events, ranging in length from from half a day to nearly a week, and in size from a few dozen people to over 10,000. Each issue of SFX will include detailed reports on recent conventions as well as a guide to forthcoming events.

Before we get into the specifics, though, many of you may already be scratching your heads and wondering: exactly what goes on at an SF convention. Is is all a horribly cliquey affair or what?

Well, no, as it happens. Typically, a convention will see a gathering of a few hundred SF fans in a hotel for a weekend, where said aficionados chat, drink, meet guest celebrities, and socialise in the name of sci-fi. Usually there's a programme of events, including discussion panels, quizzes, games, guest talks, discos and special events. Often there is a dealers' room too – sometimes even an art show. But whatever the size of the venue, conventions of all shapes and sizes have one thing in common: they're meant to be *fun*.

And that's another thing to bear in mind: the nature of "cons" (as they're called) varies enormously – from cheap do's held in Student Unions or village halls (the smallest I ever attended was in a car on the M25!) to fully-blown affairs in convention centres, where the number of attendees runs into the thousands. They can also be about specific SF *(Star Trek, Red Dwarf* or *Doctor Who),* generic SF (books, comics or horror) or everything SF-related.

Of course, it's not free. Conventions also charge a "registration fee," which enables you to attend any of the con events. This covers the costs of booking the hotel, the Guest of Honour's expenses, publicity, lighting and sound equipment, and so on, and rises as the con date approaches. (Conventions typically start advertising two years in advance, although a bigger event, like the Worldcon, can take up to four years to prepare.)

Attendees need to book their own hotel accommodation, but this is frequently at a reduced rate, and cheaper guest-houses are often nearby. One thing is certain – you're unlikely to be ripped off. Most UK cons are non-profit-making events, run by groups of fans in their spare time, although more professional cons have started appearing recently.

Confabulation: The 46th British National Science Fiction Convention

Great panels and plenty of fun at this year's Eastercon. Mary Branscombe reports.

Huge deserted buildings, an automatic railway shuttling empty carriages between steel and glass edifices – London's Docklands (more precisely, the Britannia International hotel) was an appropriately futuristic setting for this year's Eastercon, this time round called Confabulation. The guests were Lois McMaster Bujold – award-winning author of the Miles Vorkosigan space operas *(Shards of Honour, Mirror Dance)* and one fantasy novel the *Spirit Ring* – and Bob Shaw, author of *Orbitsville* and *Light of Other Days,* who entertained the convention with one of his pun-laden Serious Scientific Talks on the Irish Space Programme (although he confesses he knows little of science, having been thrown out of the Science Fiction Writers of America for assuming that a monomolecular layer was just a very small chicken).

Lois McMaster Bujold was the Eastercon guest of honour.

Other SF authors who put in appearances over the weekend included Mary Gentle, Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Colin Greenland, Jack Cohen, Jeff Noon, Geoff Ryman, John Brunner and Harry Harrison. As this year's World Science Fiction Convention, Intersection, is being held in Glasgow in August, and fans are knee-deep in organising it, the committee planned Confabulation as a long weekend of relaxation, with two sessions of Moose TV – an assortment of interviews and adverts for future conventions, modelled after breakfast-time TV. One of the more popular programme items teamed John Brunner, Jeff Noon and Mary Gentle to discuss the use of cities in SF, ranging from Brunner's ecological disasters to Jeff Noon's near-present day futuristic Manchester in *Vurt.*

Jeff Noon was also part of a debate on the future of written SF (Has the science gone out of science fiction?), which ended up as a lengthy discussion in the bar. Another popular item was *Babylon 5* (Is it good TV or good science fiction, or both?). In fact, the latter proved so popular there was an impromptu showing of several episodes.

Although few publishers or editors were present, Signet launched the Creed imprint, a new line of dark fantasy with books from Storm Constantine, Graham Joyce and Freda Warrington. The winners of this year's British Science Fiction Association awards were also announced on Saturday night: Iain M Banks won best novel for *Feersum Endjinn,* best short fiction went to Paul Di Filipo's *Double Helix* in the British SF magazine *Interzone,* and best artwork to Jim Burns for a US *Interzone* cover illustrating Karen Joy Fowler's *Artificial Things.*

The 1997 Eastercon, Intervention, will be held at the Adelphi in Liverpool, and run by the group that organised the highly successful biennial Summer Wincons in Winchester. Before that, though, there's the 1996 Eastercon, Evolution, to look forward to. (More details from Evolution, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London.)

Fantastic Days

Dates for your diary

Starting next month, we'll be including a full listing of forthcoming conventions, so if you're running a con, send full details to Live!, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

24-28 August 1995
Intersection SECC, Glasgow

This is the annual World Science Fiction Convention (or Worldcon), which only visits Britain every eight years or so. Thousands of fans from all over the world attend, along with many SF professionals. It's a rare, not-to-be-missed opportunity to meet an enormous cross-section of fandom. Unfortunately, because the con is very nearly upon us, membership is now a wallet-worrying £80. Guests of Honour are *Thunderbirds* creator Gerry Anderson, authors Peter Morwood, Diane Duane and Samuel R Delaney, and artist Les Edwards.
For details, send an SAE to **Intersection, Admail 336, Glasgow G2 1BR** or e-mail **intersection@smof.demon.co.uk**

5-8 April 1996
Evolution

Next year's Eastercon, the biggest annual British SF convention, will be held at the Raddison Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, and all the movers and shakers in British SF will be attending. Guests include authors Vernor Vinge and Colin Greenland, comics artist Bryan Talbot and scientific advisor Professor Jack Cohen. Membership costs £24 or £14 for children.
For details, send an SAE to: **Evolution, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London NW3 6PX** or e-mail **bmh@ee.ic.ac.uk**

12-14 April 1996
Accelerate 96

The third British *Quantum Leap* convention. Following successful one-day "minicons" in previous years, *QL* fans are now moving up to a full weekend of guests, panels and fun, for which registration is £35.
For details, send an SAE to: **Accelerate 96, 78 Sterry Rd, Dagenham, Essex RM10 8NT**

24-27 May 1996
Inconsequential V: Inconsistent

The "Incons" are a biannual series of conventions which put the emphasis firmly on fun. Previous Incons featured Terry Pratchett on trial and Robert Rankin in a jacuzzi! The venue is the Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington, Yorkshire. Registration is £22 until next Easter.
For details, please write to: **Inconsistent, Flat 1, 31 Saxon Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5EQ**

© John C. Rees

Gerry Anderson: in Glasgow 24-28 August.

WIN! WIN! WIN!
SPECIAL SFX BUMPER BIRTHDAY BONANZA!

WE'VE GOT LOADS OF GREAT SCIENCE FICTION GOODIES CLUTTERING UP OUR OFFICE, SO WHY NOT ENTER THESE FANTASTIC COMPETITIONS AND TAKE THEM OFF OUR HANDS?

To celebrate the launch of SFX, we're offering a sackful of prizes in not just one – but *five* – different competitions. All the goodies have been kindly donated by the below-named publishers and video companies, to whom we offer our hearty thanks. The rules are simple: you can enter as many compos as you like, but each entry must come on a separate postcard (or on similarly sized piece of paper), with your name and address marked clearly on the back, along with your answer.

This helps us when we're putting each entry into its rightful place in a carefully arranged row of upturned Imperial Stormtrooper helmets, from which the winners will be drawn at the appropriate time. (Don't worry – this isn't some sort of pact we've made with the Post Office to get you buying lots of stamps. You can put all your entries in the same envelope if you like; just make sure they're on different bits of paper, that's all.) Remember, though, you can only enter each competition *once* – multiple entries are a definite no-no. The closing date for all these competitions is Monday 3 July.

Right, now get those thinking caps on, and may the best man/woman/many-tentacled-green-thing-from-the-planet-Tharg win.

Those rules and regulations in full

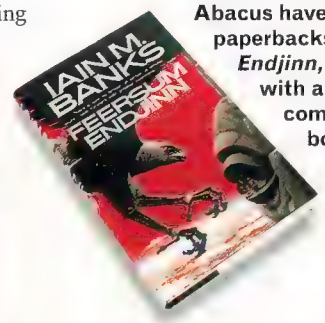
1. All entries should come on a separate piece of paper or on the back of a postcard.
2. The closing date for all competitions is **Monday 3 July**.
3. Winners names will be published in the **August** issue, on sale **Tuesday 25 July**.
4. No correspondence will be entered into concerning these competitions, the judges' decision (that's us) is final, cash alternatives are not available, and the cheque is in the mail.

Japanese Toon-Babes Compo

The lovely people at Manga Entertainment – purveyors of such top-class Japanese fare as *Akira, Dominion: Tank Police, Legend of the Four Kings* and, erm, *Godzilla Vs Mothra* – have recently released the first two volumes of *Macross Plus,* which is the first Japanese anime series to blend computer effects with traditional hand-drawn animation. We've got ten sets of these videos to give away, and all you have to do to nab one is answer the following: Who directed the seminal anime flick *Akira?*

Mark your entry Japanese Toon-Babes Compo, and send it to: SFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The first ten correct entries drawn will win the vids.

Wild Scotsman Compo



To tie in with our Iain Banks interview (see page 44), we've got a ready-made Banksie library to give away. The folks at Orbit and Abacus have given us all 12 Banks paperbacks, plus his latest, *Feersum Endjinn,* in stunning hardback. To be in with a chance of winning the man's complete works – total value: a bookshelf-busting £92.87 – just tell us what was the title of his first printed novel.

Mark your entry Wild Scotsman Compo, and send it to: SFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The first correct entry drawn wins the set.

Genetically Engineered Kangaroo Compo

***The Making Of Tank Girl* by Frank Wynne is a behind-the-scenes look at the movie everyone's talking about. (You know the one – it's currently gracing the cover of all the best SF mags.) It's a pretty fabulous volume, this, liberally illustrated with great photos and artwork, and would normally set you back a kibblesworth under eight quid.**

However, in a once-only offer, Titan Books has agreed to let us give away copies to 20 people who can answer the following: What was star-babe Lori Petty's last film prior to taking on the eponymous title role in *Tank Girl?*

Mark your entry Genetically Engineered Kangaroo Compo, and send it to: SFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The first 20 correct entries plucked will win a copy of the book (see the review on page 86.)

Mysteriously Absent Time Lord Compo

Even though the on-off tale of *Doctor Who* seems to be primarily off, we can still follow the Time Lord's old adventures on video, thanks to BBC Video, which has chucked three complete sets of *The Key To Time,* each one packed onto six tapes, our way. Want details? Okay, in the set you'll find "The Ribos Operation," "The Pirate Planet," "The Stones Of Blood," "The Androids Of Tara," "The Power Of Kroll" and "The Armageddon Factor" Not only that, but each of the three winners will receive a Key To Time poster for their efforts too. What's more, the copies of "The Ribos Operation" have been signed by Mary (Romana) Tamm herself. To win, tell us the name of the actress who played Romana *after* her regeneration.

Send your entry, marked Mysteriously Absent Time Lord Compo, to: SFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The first three entries drawn will win the video sets.

Cool Computer Animation Compo

Computer graphics have come a long way since *Tron,* which looks like a batch of cave paintings next to the latest digital animation fest that is *Reboot.* But the latter is more than just a bundle of pretty visuals. Following in the tradition of series like *The Clangers,* it's a SF programme that appeals to everybody, and not just kids. We've got ten copies of the *Reboot* video to give away, courtesy of Polygram. To win a copy, just tell us which film about kung fu chelonians did *Reboot* man Steve Barron do the directorial-thang for?

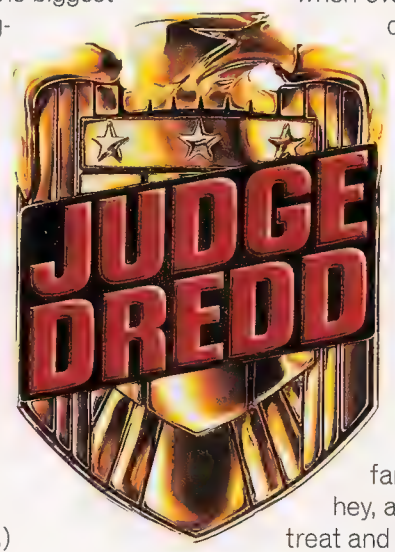
Mark your entry Cool Computer Animation Compo, and send it to: SFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. The first ten correct entries will win the videos.

30 DAYS INTO THE FUTURE...

Coming next month in SFX

Dredd

If you thought our *Tank Girl* coverage was good, wait until you see what we've got on what could easily be the biggest film of the year – the long-awaited *Judge Dredd,* starring Sylvester Stallone and Max Von Sydow. We've got the complete story of the shoot, the long, drawn-out tale of how – after all sorts of false starts – it finally made it to the big screen, interviews with the cast and crew, and much, much more. You really can't afford to miss this one. (Hey, you don't want to get on the wrong side of the Judge...)



Gerry Anderson

One of SFX's all-time heroes, Gerry kept British TV science fiction alive when everyone else had given up on it as too expensive or too difficult. Next issue we talk to the man himself about *Thunderbirds, Captain Scarlet, Four Feather Falls* (no, really) and, of course, *Space Precinct*; ponder on what Lady Penelope and Parker really got up to in the privacy of her own home; and reassess the man and his works. For fans of Supermarionation – hey, aren't we all? – it'll be a treat and a half.

Plus!

Behind the scenes at *Proteus,* Jeff Noon, *Babylon 5,* and more...

The best is yet to come...

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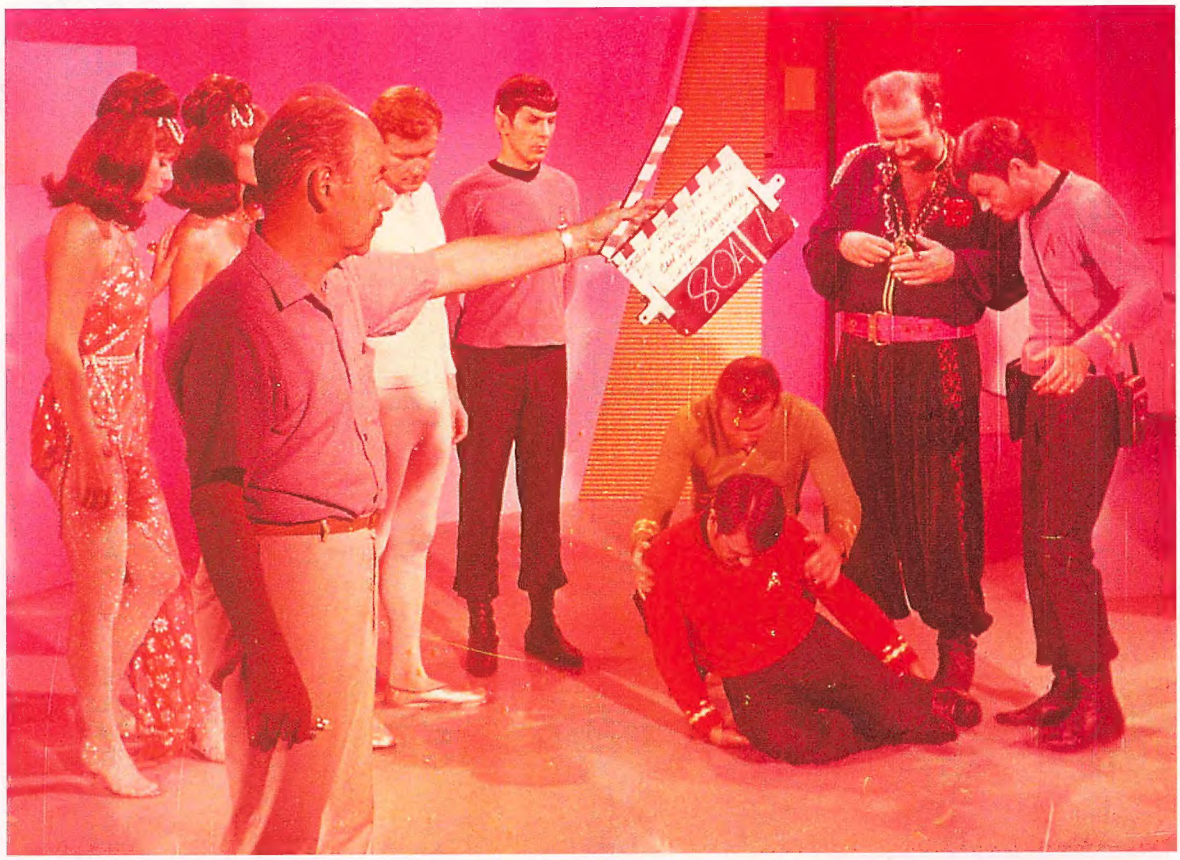
CLASSIC STAR TREK

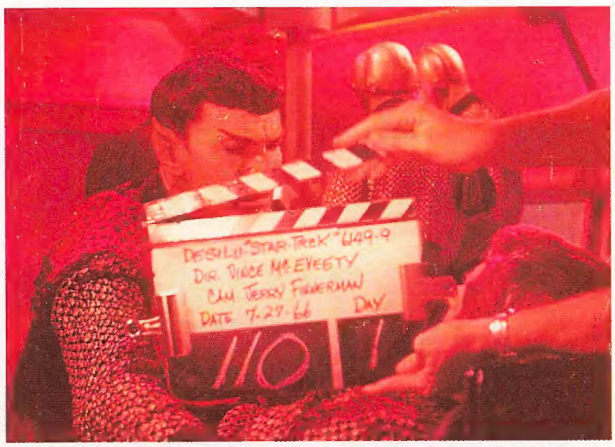
Rare behind-the-scenes shots from the greatest SF show of all. By Rod Summers.

Errand of Mercy

Writer: **Gene L Coon**
Director: **John Newland**
First aired (US): **23 March 1967**

Above: Kor (John Colicos), the Klingon military governor of the neutral planet Organia. Kirk and Spock find themselves trapped on the planet by the Klingons' sudden arrival, and become a two-man resistance movement – since the locals don't seem to want to get involved! Colicos recently reprised his role as Kor in the *Deep Space Nine* episode "Blood Oath."





Balance of Terror

Writer: **Paul Schneider**
Director: **Vince McEveety**
First aired (US): **15 December 1966**

Left: The Romulan Commander (Mark Lenard) shares a few last words with his dying friend, the Centurion (John Warburton), who's been crushed by falling debris when the USS Enterprise attacks. Lenard, of course, went on to achieve *Star Trek* immortality as Spock's father, Ambassador Sarek, in the second season episode "Journey to Babel," and, later, several *Star Trek* movies and *Next Generation* episodes.

I, Mudd

Writers: **Stephen Kandel and David Gerrold**
Director: **Marc Daniels**
First aired (US): **3 November 1967**

Above: This second season episode was the second to feature intergalactic con-man Harcourt Fenton Mudd (Roger C Carmel), the first being "Mudd's Women." Here we see Kirk, Spock and McCoy desperately trying to confuse the android controller Norman (Richard Tatro) through a ludicrous display of illogic. Scotty is being positioned to match the previous scene.

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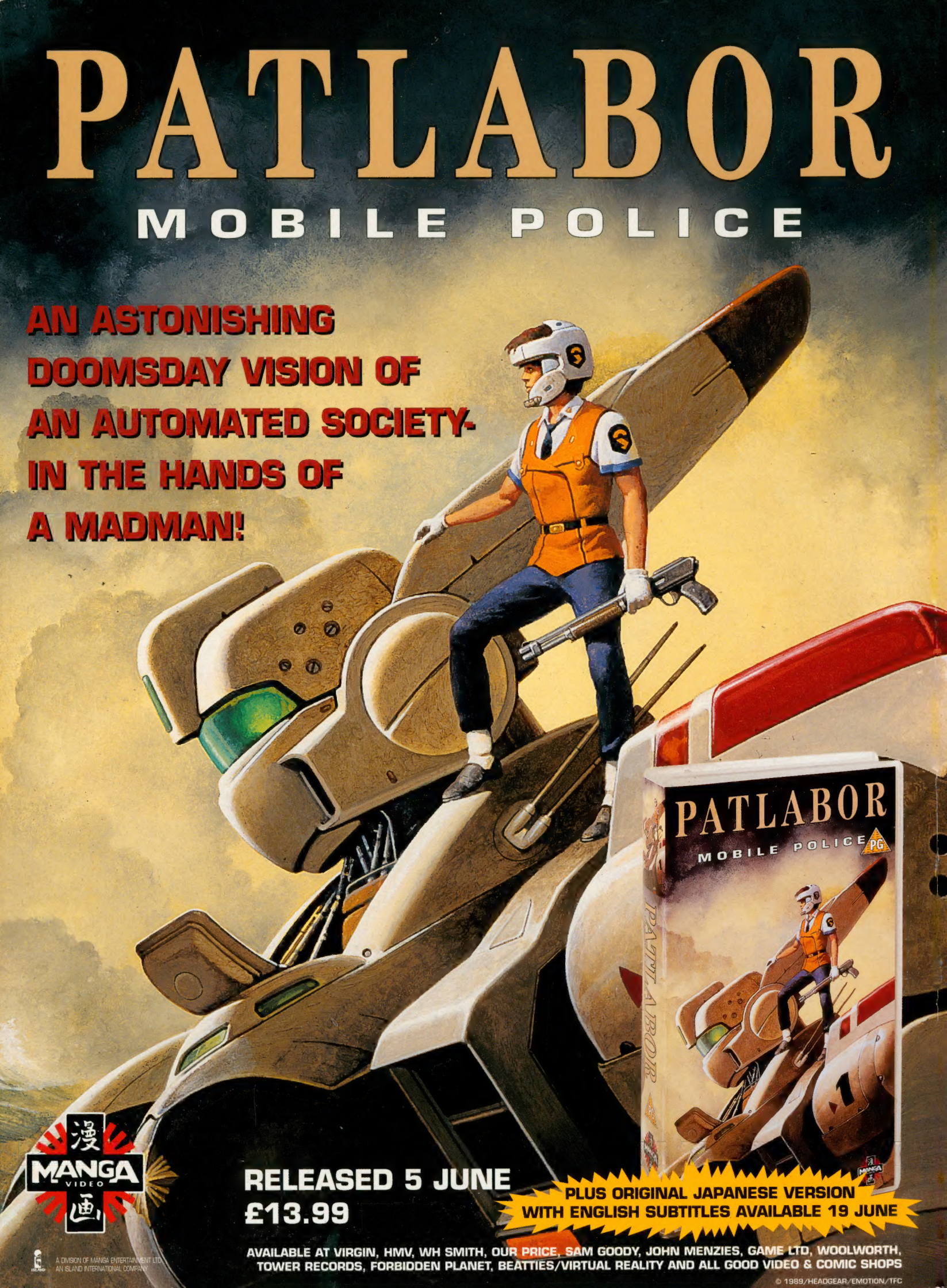

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